

THE BLACK LENS

MARCH 2025 - VOL. 10 - ISSUE NO. 3

PUSHING PAST FEAR



COLIN MULVANY/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

“We stand in solidarity to come up with a plan,” said Virla Spencer, co-founder and CEO of the Way to Justice, center, after the Trump administration’s sudden freeze on federal grant funds for a review on ideological grounds have left local agencies and organizations like the nonprofit legal aid the Way to Justice scrambling as they try to understand whether and when their funding may be pulled. Left to right are Alethea Dumas, community organizer; Analesa Mason, legal assistant; Alondra Maqueda, legal assistant; Spencer; Camerina Zorrozuza, legal director and co-founder; Erica Cleveland, outreach coordinator; and Elizabeth Wilder, legal intern.

THE LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR

Washington’s Community Reinvestment Project discontinued

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

The recent budget freeze from the federal government, combined with state-level budget cuts, is sandwiching social justice initiatives between a rock and a hard place. One of the most significant casualties is the defunding of Washington’s Community Reinvestment Project (CRP), a program initially funded with \$200 million under former Gov. Jay Inslee. This initiative aimed to address the historical harm done to Black and Brown communities, particularly those affected by the war on drugs and targeted policing.

Virla Spencer, co-founder of The Way To Justice shares that the program is not being continued, with a remaining \$87,000 to carry out critical restorative programming.

The CRP was designed to provide

opportunities for economic mobility and social stability to those who have historically been marginalized. This included funding for workforce development, reentry programs, legal aid, first-time homebuyer assistance, and small business support. Many viewed it as a form of reparations, a crucial step in addressing systemic inequities that have persisted for generations.

Spencer knows how vital this programming is in the Black community. When the program was first introduced in 2022, she shares that the expectation was that unspent funds from the initial two-year allocation would roll over into future budgets. Despite more than half of the original funds remaining, the state government has decided not to reinvest in the program; effectively dismantling



APRIL EBERHARDT/THE BLACK LENS
Virla Spencer is the co-founder and CEO of the Way to Justice.

See **FUNDING, 7**

“*I would say respect is of course a mutual situation, but it’s also just giving you what you need ... creating space for you, but also taking up the space that is created for you.*”

‘R.E.S.P.E.C.T.’ touring Broadway actress Cristina Rae

An interview with ‘R.E.S.P.E.C.T.’ touring Broadway actress

THE POWER AND LEGACY OF ICONIC ARETHA FRANKLIN



COURTESY OF BEST OF BROADWAY
Cristina Rae, center, in the Broadway touring production of “R.E.S.P.E.C.T.”

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

Aretha Franklin’s music has shaped generations, and for singer and Broadway singer and actress Cristina Rae, the Queen of Soul’s influence is both personal and profound. As she takes the stage in the national Broadway tour of “R.E.S.P.E.C.T.” on Friday, March 7, in Spokane at the First Interstate Center for the Arts, Rae shares her thoughts on the power of storytelling through music, art transcending entertainment, and the responsibility she feels artists have to shape culture.

“R.E.S.P.E.C.T.” is more than just a musical; it’s a celebration of Aretha Franklin’s impact on music, activism and culture. According to Rae, the production blends Franklin’s music with historical context, highlighting the

See **RAE, 7**

Empowering homeownership

Learning about state’s covenant program

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

In a recent interview with the Black Lens, Angela Smith, an outreach and engagement specialist with the Washington state Housing Finance Commission (WSHFC), provided an overview of the organization’s role in facilitating affordable housing opportunities. Smith has been actively involved in community outreach, a new initiative for the agency aimed at enhancing public awareness and engagement.

Washington state is taking a significant step toward addressing historical housing discrimination with the Covenant Homeownership Program. This initiative, spearheaded by the WSHFC, aims to provide financial assistance to those who have been historically excluded from homeownership opportunities due to past discriminatory practices.

The Covenant Homeownership Program was designed to address housing disparities resulting from discriminatory policies before 1968, when the Fair Housing Act was enacted. Before this law, racial covenants and redlining practices systematically denied communities of color the ability to purchase homes, preventing them from building generational wealth.

Recognizing these past injustices, Washington state legislators, including Rep. Jamila Taylor, worked to establish the Covenant Homeownership Program in HB 1474. The initiative officially launched in January 2024 and is expected to support homeownership for eligible applicants statewide.

To qualify for the program, applicants must meet several criteria:

- Be a first-time homebuyer, which means they have not owned a home in the past three years.
- Must reside in Washington state and occupy the purchased home.
- Income must be at or below 100% of the area median income (AMI), which varies by county. For instance, the AMI limit for King County is \$147,000, while for Spokane County, it is \$100,000.
- Have a documented familial connection to

individuals who lived in Washington before 1968 and were affected by housing discrimination.

- Identify as part of a racial or ethnic group that historically faced discrimination in housing policies, including African American, Native American and Hispanic communities.

The program provides substantial financial assistance, covering up to 20% of the home’s purchase price or a maximum of \$150,000. This assistance includes down payments and closing costs, reducing the overall loan burden for homebuyers.

Interested applicants must:

- Take a free homebuyer education workshop offered by trained lenders or nonprofit organizations.
- Work with a certified lender who is knowledgeable about the Covenant Homeownership Program.
- Provide documentation proving residency in Washington before 1968 and verification of racial or ethnic identity. Acceptable documents include birth certificates, school records, marriage certificates, obituaries and other historical records.

Advocates and legislators are pushing for additional improvements to the program. As of now, at least 250 families have purchased homes through the program, with approximately 180 being African American households. Native American and Hispanic applicants make up the next largest groups of beneficiaries.

The Covenant Homeownership Program is a groundbreaking initiative that directly addresses the historical injustices that have prevented communities of color from achieving homeownership.

For more information, potential applicants can visit the Washington State Housing Finance Commission’s website at wshfc.org/covenant or call the Washington State Homeownership Hotline at (877) 894-4663.

More online

To learn more, scan this QR code.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PART III

Revisiting ubuntu practice

In last month’s column, we began our discussion of the connections between ubuntu and restorative justice theories/practice. For reference, we used Dirk Louw’s cited article. We started by studying the first three of six points of concentricity: agreement, community, and religion/spirituality. This month, we’ll briefly cover the remainder: particularity, individuality, and historicity.

Particularity: The ideologies underlying ubuntu and restorative justice are operationalized – made real in the world – through dialogue. Both recognize that meaningful dialogue holds transformative possibilities. A dialogic process that can bring together those in



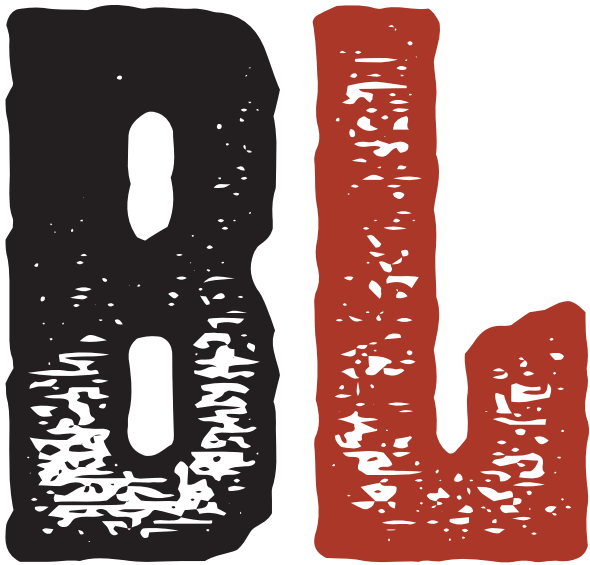
By Inga Laurent
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



tension while simultaneously valuing the worth and dignity of all while still encouraging authenticity and accountability is

See **UBUNTU, 7**

PUSHING PAST FEAR



NEWS

BLACKLENS.NEWS

CORRECTIONS

Name misspelled

The name of Fannie Bush was misspelled in a February cutline.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Anthony Mackie is the 1st Black on-screen ‘Captain America’

Anthony Mackie taking on the role of Captain America, a fictional comic book character initially portrayed as a white man with blond hair and blue eyes, isn’t groundbreaking to comic books fans.

The idea of a Black man as the patriotic superhero was introduced in 1998 by writer Mark Waid in the comic book “Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty,” where, according to Waid, Sam Wilson first “picked up the costume and took on the identity of Captain America,” reported NBC News.

The issue of a Black Captain America in the Marvel Cinematic Universe first arose after Chris Evans, who portrayed Cap on-screen for eight years, passed the mantle on to Mackie’s Falcon in 2019’s “Avengers: Endgame.” Fans were upset with Evans’ departure.

Though some eventually warmed up to the idea after seeing Mackie in the 2021 critically acclaimed Disney+ series, “Falcon and the Winter Soldier,” where Mackie’s Falcon grapples with the complicated notion of what it means for a Black man to be Captain America, the vitriol against actor ramped back up during his press run for “Captain America: Brave New World.”

During a Q&A in January, fans threatened to boycott the film, because of Mackie’s comments on what he thinks Captain America represents.

“Captain America represents a lot of different things, and I don’t think the term ‘America’ should be one of those representations. It’s about a man who keeps his word and who has honor, dignity, and integrity. Someone who is trustworthy and dependable. This is like an aspect of a dream coming true,” the actor said at the time.

Following the backlash, Mackie has since clarified his comments, saying he’s a “proud American,” and that Captain America is “important for kids of all races.”

After armed neo-Nazis get protection, Black residents in Ohio express disbelief

Some Black leaders and residents in greater Cincinnati expressed dismay after armed, masked neo-Nazis were allowed to gather on a freeway bridge without arrest.

Some have called for a quick investigation of the response by Evendale police and Hamilton County sheriff’s deputies after the demonstration Feb. 7 on the Interstate 75 overpass between the Village of Evendale and Lincoln Heights, the latter a historically Black community, according to an article published by NBC News.

The biggest question for critics of the response is why none of the neo-Nazi demonstrators was arrested after the group was confronted by community members, firearms on display on both sides.

The Rev. Julian Armand Cook of Lincoln Heights Missionary Baptist Church said in an interview with NBC News that the demonstration of hatred was shocking.

“To see it show up at the gateway to this historic community, the first, the oldest Black self-governed city north of the Mason-Dixon Line, it is very clear what message it is sending,” he said to NBC News. “So it was – I was angry. I was hurt. I was shocked.”

Evendale police said in a statement that officers were bound to protect the First Amendment rights of demonstrators and, even though the demonstration was carried out without a permit, it was legal.

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NEWS

OUR SENSE OF BELONGING BEGINS WITH FAMILY

FROM THE BOARD

By Michael Bethely
THE BLACK LENS BOARD MEMBER

As a member of this community, I have seen firsthand how the powerful forces of family, community, and love can intertwine and propel our overall mission forward. One of the reasons I felt honored to be on this board was because The Black Lens isn’t just a newspaper that’s reporting the news—it is about telling the stories of the people, inspiring minds, uplifting voices, encouraging change, and ensuring that our collective truths are heard and honored.

Family is the root from which our sense of belonging and responsibility grows. Just as a tree relies on its roots for stability and nourishment, our newspaper thrives because of the deep connections and support we receive from the families within our community. The families that have been here, the families that are growing, and the families that are trying to find their place within the community. The stories we tell are those of our neighbors, our elders, our youth – people who shape the very fabric of our existence.

Community, like the branches of a strong tree, extends in all directions, reaching and connecting us. It is through the dedication of our community members – our readers, writers, future sponsors and volunteers – that we continue to exist. Each contribution, whether a shared story, a donated resource, or a helping hand at an event, strengthens our purpose and deepens our impact. This newspaper is not just a publication; it is a communal effort, a space where ev-



APRIL EBERHARDT/THE BLACK LENS

Michael Bethely and his family.

ery voice matters, and where every story adds to the larger narrative of who we are.

At the heart of it all is love. Love is photosynthesis – the process by which our families and community use the light of others to synthesize the needed elements that can nourish our growth as a community. Love fuels our commitment to this work. Love drives the late nights spent crafting meaningful articles, the relentless pursuit of truth, and the desire to shed light on important issues that matter to our people. Love is the force that reminds us that our newspaper is not just ink on paper but a beacon of hope, education, and unity.

When family, community, and love align, we accomplish incred-

ible things. We meet the needs of our publication by working together, by holding each other accountable, and by ensuring that no story goes untold. We thrive when our readers see themselves reflected in our pages, when businesses invest in our mission and grow because of it, and when volunteers lend their valuable time to help us and keep us moving forward.

This newspaper belongs to all of us. It is a testament to what we can achieve when we nurture our roots, strengthen our branches, and let love be our guiding force. Together, we continue to tell our stories, empower our voices, and ensure that our newspaper remains a living, breathing part of our shared experience.

CITY COUNCIL ROUNDUP

Council Member Michael Cathcart introduces resolution to oppose HB 1339

From Black Lens staff reports

Council Member Michael Cathcart announced the introduction of a resolution opposing House Bill 1339. The proposed legislation, known as HB 1339, would move municipal elections alongside state and federal races to even-numbered years.

“House Bill 1339 is an unnecessary and reckless overhaul of local elections,” Cathcart said in a news release. “Moving municipal elections would bury local issues beneath high-profile state and federal races, making it harder for voters to focus on local governance. It doesn’t just open the door to partisan interference – it kicks it in.

“Holding local elections concurrently with presidential, legislative, and congressional campaigns will leave voters little time or energy to

research down-ballot issues. City elections work best when voters can focus on local leadership, not when they’re lumped in with national political brawls.”

Cathcart noted that Spokane County Auditor Vicky Dalton and Washington Secretary of State Steve Hobbs have expressed the same concern. In a News Tribune editorial, they cautioned merging local and even-year races would erode media coverage of city issues, push important debates into the background and discourage voters from engaging with municipal candidates.

“Spokane’s municipal elections are intentionally designed to be non-partisan, prioritizing leadership and policy over party labels,” Cathcart continued. “Holding them alongside partisan campaigns risks politicizing local issues. Therefore, merging

our city elections with big-ticket partisan battles will politicize our races. It takes issues like public safety or infrastructure investments and turns them into just another front in the partisan war.

“That’s not how Spokane should be operating.”

Cathcart’s resolution directs that HB 1339 (or similar legislation) be added to Spokane’s legislative agenda as an opposed measure. It affirms that the city has no interest in moving our local elections to even years.

“HB 1339 does the opposite of what good governance requires,” he said in the release, “it adds confusion, undermines confidence, and makes it harder for voters to engage. It’s unnecessary and will result in fewer people participating in the elections that impact their daily lives the most.”

Read. Write.

Turn the Page.



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

THE BLACK LENS

Serving Spokane’s Black community since 2015

IN MEMORY OF SANDRA WILLIAMS
FOUNDING EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

THE BLACK LENS EDITOR & BOARD MEMBERS

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

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Statement of Independence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



HAPPENING AROUND TOWN



Amari Troutt presents Bryan Chel Lara with the 2025-26 Sandra Williams Memorial Scholarship.

GROOVING THROUGH TIME AND LEGACY

Gonzaga Black Student Union brings community together in annual dinner

By Black Lens staff reports

On Feb. 15 at Gonzaga University, the Black Student Union, under the leadership of president Amari Troutt (senior), hosted a dinner to celebrate Black culture.

The Soul Train theme was a nod to an era of unapologetic appreciation for Black identity on the heels of the Civil Rights movement during the 1970s. Pro-Black expression in America culminated as a response to bigotry and prejudice, its defiance a declaration that who we

are is not a source of embarrassment or shame, but one of beauty, strength, and creativity.

Highlights of the evening included a lip sync battle between two groups, replicating performances of the Jackson 5 and Kool and the Gang's "Hollywood Swinging" and recognition of the winners of the 2025-26 Sandra Williams Memorial Scholarship, Kendall Featherstone and Byan Chel Lara.

For this scholarship, sophomores are awarded \$500, which is renewable for senior year, and juniors are awarded \$1000.



Priya Osborne and Albert Nhlophe paid homage to the Black Panther Party.



Three generations of the Troutt family pose after a special honor from Angel Troutt to her daughter, GU BSU President Amari Troutt. Left to right is Angel Troutt, Amari and grandmother of Amari and mother of Angel, Peggie Troutt.

Crown Ministries to host powerful prayer breakfast

From Black Lens staff reports

First Lady of Bethel A.M.E., Debbie Watson, understands the power of prayer and the strength in unity. This belief is the driving force behind an upcoming Prayer Breakfast hosted by Crown Ministries on March 15.

Emphasizing the urgency of faith in today's challenging times, Watson reminds us that adversity is running rampant in our communities, cities, and nation. Her exhortation: stay consistent and do not be distracted by chaos. She hopes to reinforce the message that we are stronger together—this is a prayer breakfast for everyone.

"As believers, we must turn to the Word," she reflects. Now, more than ever, we need each other, she shares. Watson acknowledges the

confusion, anxiety, and frustration that many are feeling, but she also reminds us that how we respond to fear determines our strength. **Faith has no fear** – steadfastness and resilience are embedded in our collective history. This prayer breakfast is a response to the angst we feel when confronted with current events. The solution? Move as one and refuse to go in circles.

The following spiritual leaders will serve as Prayer Warriors: Pastor Tommie Whitman of Mount Zion Holiness Church, Pastor Patrick Hamm of Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church, Prophetess Judy Brazell of Bethel A.M.E., Missionary Faith Washington of Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, and Kay Mack, also of Holy Temple Church of God in Christ. The theme of the

IF YOU GO

Prayer breakfast

THEME: One Nation Under God (Psalm 33:12)

WHEN: 9:30 a.m. March 15

WHERE: Bethel A.M.E. Church, 645 S. Richard Allen Court

COST: \$27 ages 13 and up; \$10 ages 6-12

prayer breakfast is "One Nation Under God" following Psalm 33:12.

Space is limited, and registration is highly encouraged. Please refer to the event flyer for further details. Join us as we come together in faith, standing firm in prayer and unity. We are stronger together!

One Nation Under God!

Psalm 33:12

CROWN

BETH THE MINISTRIES

LOVE

Prayer Breakfast

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13 and Up \$27.00

Children 6-12 Yrs \$10.00

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"Se wo were fi na wosan kofa a yenkyiri." *

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Saturday, May 3, 2025, 2-4pm

Gonzaga University,

Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center

Sponsored by SPOKANE AFRICAN-AMERICAN GRADUATION COMMITTEE

Registration deadline: Friday, April 11, 2025

Registration link: Scan QR Code

Information: aagradspokane@gmail.com

Acknowledging our past, honoring our present, and building a brighter future.

* "It is not taboo to return to fetch that which has been forgotten."

BUSINESS / NEWS

SIPS 'N' TIPS

FINANCIAL ACUMEN IS PART OF OUR STORY

Black History Month may be over, but our history extends far beyond the month of February. Throughout history, African Americans – from the era of slavery to the present – have demonstrated resilience, determination, and financial acumen in building their empires, often in the face of immense adversity. These pioneers became giants in the world of finance and entrepreneurship, shaping industries and inspiring future generations. Some of their names are well-known, while others remain unsung heroes. Here are just a few remarkable individuals who have left their mark:

FREDERICK DOUGLAS: Born into slavery, Frederick Douglass understood from a young age that true freedom came through ownership and wealth. His first escape attempt as a young man was unsuccessful, leading to his capture and return to the plantation. Undeterred, he escaped again – this time disguised as a sailor – eventually making his way to Massachusetts.

ARTHUR G. GASTON: Arthur Gaston was a pioneering entrepreneur who exemplified the power of creating multiple streams of income. He built a business empire across Birmingham, Alabama, starting with a funeral home. He later founded the Booker T. Washington Insurance Company, providing insured burial services. His ventures continued with the establishment of the Citizens Savings and Loan Association, the Gaston Construction Company, and CFS Bancshares, a financial institution. By the 1960s, Gaston had become one of the richest Black men in America, leaving a lasting legacy in business and finance. (Book: “Black Titan: A.G. Gaston and the Making of a Black American Millionaire”)

REGINALD F. LEWIS: Reginald F. Lewis was considered the richest Black man in America during the 1980s and was a master at expanding the value of the companies he invested in. A graduate of Harvard Law School, he founded the investment firm TLC Group L.P. and, in 1983, acquired the famous McCall’s Sewing Pattern Company for \$22.5 million, later selling it for \$65 million just three years later.

In 1987, Lewis made history by purchasing Beatrice International Foods, renaming it TLC Beatrice International, and transforming it into the largest Black-owned and managed company in



By Rhonda Leonard-Horwith
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



the country. In 1987, TLC Beatrice International grossed \$1.8 billion, making it the first Black-owned company to surpass \$1 billion in sales. (Book: “Why Should White Guys Have All The Fun? How Reginald Lewis Created a Billion-Dollar Business Empire”)

Charles Clinton Spaulding, Aaron McDuffie Moore, John Merrick: The three cofounded the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company in 1898 – the now-oldest and largest African-American life insurance company in the United States. At the time, all three men were members of the Durham community: Spaulding, the general manager of a grocery company; Moore, a practicing physician; and Merrick, an entrepreneur with barbershops across Durham. At the time, Durham was referred to as “Black Wall Street”, notably for the economic successes blacks were seeing through business. The company still stands today – with assets estimated at \$162 million. (Book: “Black Business in the New South: A Social History of the NC Mutual Life Insurance Company”)

MAGGIE LENA WALKER: Walker was the first Black woman in the United States to charter a bank. By pooling her community’s money, she formed the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank, of which she served as the first president. Later, when the bank merged with two other Richmond, VA banks to form The Consolidated Bank and Trust Company, she served as the chairman of its board of directors. (Book: “Maggie L. Walker: Pioneering Banker and Community Leader”)

Each of these financial giants offers valuable lessons on acquiring, developing, growing, saving, and protecting wealth. Their legacies serve as powerful examples of financial empowerment, strategic investment, and resilience in the face of adversity.

Maggie Lena Walker



Arthur G. Gaston



Charles Clinton Spaulding, Aaron McDuffie Moore, John Merrick



Reginald F. Lewis



APRIL EBERHARDT/THE BLACK LENS

Elysee Kazadi speaks about bridging gaps within the African diaspora on Feb. 20 during an NAACP Spokane town hall at Spokane Community College.

NAACP Spokane hosts town hall on Trump administration’s DEI ban

Black Lens staff report

On Feb. 20, the Spokane branch of the NAACP held a town hall at Spokane Community College to have a constructive conversation about how to resist the DEI ban, and move in unified solidarity.

Elysee Kazadi, pictured above, talked about bridging the gaps within the African diaspora to grow collective power, as we are all under attack. He emphasized the great need to build community against the chaos, capitalizing on these moments of getting to know your neighbor.

“Talk to your neighbor, because (when) I know my neighbor I know the truth,” he shared. Insulated and siloed communities, repeated throughout the evening, are our greatest disadvantage, he said.

April Eberhardt, Spokane NAACP Education Committee Chair; District Attorney Francis Adewale; and Jerall Haynes, City of Spokane Civil Rights Director, were panelists at the event. Adewale reinforced the

strength we carry together by sharing our knowledge.

“We in Africa understand all of these tricks. We know how autocrats grow, how they develop. What we are seeing now, we saw that movie before ... We need to shine our eyes,” referring to an idiom that serves as a strong warning to wake up. “The end goal is not DEI. The end goal is belonging, and we often forget that. They can weaponize any language at any point in time. We as a community have to agree that we will not let them erase us ... We are better when we bring others in. We get richer, we make better decisions.”

This point was sternly emphasized by the statement that DEI is not tokenism. Haynes echoed the message of collective action.

“One of the ways that a community protects itself is through education,” Haynes said.

Haynes continued that when communities come together to create and build their own resources, you can’t be starved out.

DAY IN OLYMPIA FOCUSES ON HOUSING

The Washington Low Income Housing Alliance invites you to join



Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day on March 14 in Olympia. For those of you who work with a

nonprofit 501c3 organization, you can still participate and advocate! **Advocacy: Educating on an issue = No limits.**

HHAD is one of the largest annual lobby days at the state Capitol. It brings together people who are passionate about affordable homes, tenant protections and ending homelessness to meet with state



lawmakers and rally for housing justice.

If you live in central or Eastern WA, and wonder how to get there, we’re excited to share we have chartered buses to Olympia for the advocacy day on Friday, March 14.

The bus is free and dinner will be provided. We will start in Spokane and make stops in Moses Lake and Ellensburg.

To reserve your spot on one of the buses, fill out this quick form by scanning the accompanying QR code. Be sure to also register for HAAD if you haven’t already.

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EDUCATION

PRACTICING NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

A path to empathy and understanding

By Teresa Brooks
THE BLACK LENS

Over the past six months, I've had the privilege of reengaging with Marshall Rosenberg's transformative book, "Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life," through meaningful conversations with Mr. Charles Thomas. This book, which was first introduced to me by the founder of The Black Lens, initially sparked resistance in me. At the time, my immediate thought was, "You want me to sound white." I struggled to connect with its message and dismissed it without fully grasping its deeper intent.

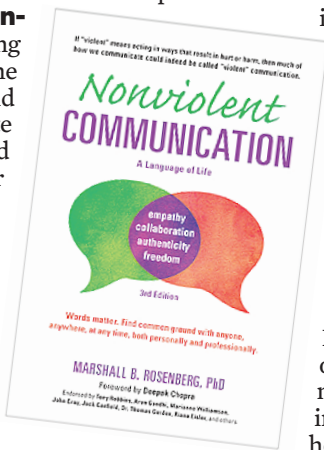
Fast forward to nearly a year of focused learning and studying, I now understand the assignment – and the profound value of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) in building bridges across differences. This framework is not about changing how we sound; it's about fostering authentic connections through four key components: **observations, feelings, needs and requests.** Rosenberg's model highlights that "everything we do is in service of our needs." These needs can be categorized, as outlined by economist Manfred Max-Neef, into **nine fundamental classes: sustenance, safety, love,**

understanding/empathy, creativity, recreation, sense of belonging, autonomy, and meaning. By addressing communication at the level of feelings and needs, we can create greater empathy and understanding in our interactions. The more I've engaged with this approach, the more I've found it to be a powerful tool for conflict resolution, fostering healthy communication, and increasing empathy within personal and professional relationships. While

psychologists often place greater emphasis on evidence-based practices like cognitive-behavioral therapy, NVC offers an accessible framework that can positively impact day-to-day life and community dynamics. This journey has inspired me to share what I've learned with others in my community. Beginning in 2025, I will be hosting a 14-week course on Nonviolent Communication, with

the goal of helping participants improve communication skills, resolve conflicts, and nurture empathy. This is especially vital in creating stronger connections within Black and BIPOC communities, where shared experiences of systemic challenges require more intentional efforts to foster trust and understanding.

If you're interested in learning more or joining the course, please contact me at brooksrunner1@gmail.com. Together, we can explore how Nonviolent Communication can help us heal, connect, and thrive. Let's work to build a Spokane community grounded in empathy and mutual respect – one conversation at a time.



60 years later: Revisiting the life, legacy and impact following the assassination of Malcolm X



Dr. Gloria Baynes, second from left, had the honor to meet with Howard University professor Byron Brown, center, as part of a Black History Month series at Eastern Washington University.

Howard University professor presents interactive sessions as part of Black History Month at Eastern Washington University

By Dr. Gloria Baynes
THE BLACK LENS

Professor Byron Brown, a professor of English, Persuasive Writing and Research at Howard University, presented at Eastern Washington University for Black History Month on February 6, 2025 at Tawanka Hall; three interactive sessions on the legacy and transformative impact of Malcolm X, one of America's most significant cultural revolutionaries of the 20th Century took place. Brown hails from South Carolina and has 7 master's degrees; he is currently working on his Ph.D. "I am thrilled to have the opportunity to serve one of my alma maters as the keynote speaker for this year's Black history program. While I am no stranger to public speaking, this is my first time ever addressing a predominantly white institution with a student body of more than ten thousand students," Brown acknowledged. Brown was the guest of EWU Africana Studies professor Dr. Scott Finnie who has lectured in Brown's classes at Howard University. "While growing up as a little boy in Eutawville with a bias perspective toward Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and a less optimistic perspective of Malcolm X, I will use this opportunity to clarify some misconceptions that people often have about Malcolm X, and develop our understanding and appreciation of the lasting impact of Malcolm X." Brown compared the two leadership styles of both activists, informing the audience that their vision was the same yet their methods and philosophies were divergent. King modeled his approach after Gandhi, centering on peaceful protests, civil disobedience, and the power of love to overcome hate and injustice. Malcolm X took a militant approach and believed in self-defense, self-empowerment and challenged racism

by any means necessary. "Dr. King was a political revolutionary and Malcolm X was a cultural revolutionary," Finnie said. Both leaders have taught us valuable lessons about how to stand up for what's right. Their legacies continue to inspire people to work toward a world where everyone is treated fairly, no matter the color of their skin. Both men's backgrounds were key to how they tackled injustice. Malcolm X's tough experiences led him to advocate for Black empowerment, often with a more direct tone. Meanwhile, King's more stable upbringing and Christian faith pushed him towards a path of peaceful protests. King's methods led to important changes in legislation, which helped end legal segregation and protected voting rights. Malcolm X, on the other hand, spoke about self-defense, self-reliance, and a community that insulated its power from within, being unapologetically Black and not assimilating to the dominant culture, which inspired groups like the Black Panther Party to take a stronger stance. Both were concerned about poverty, mass incarceration, poor housing, police brutality, etc. King believed in integration where races could coexist peacefully together and be judged on the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. Malcolm X advocated for separatism and believed that Blacks should build their own institutions and communities. Their work has had a lasting effect on how we talk about race and how people today approach fighting for change. Modern activists might organize peaceful marches similar to King's approach or focus on community empowerment, reflecting Malcolm X's influence. Students and staff had dialogue with Professor Brown on the impact of Malcolm X's leadership, his assassination and his view of the current state of the United States.



GETTY IMAGES

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

BLACK WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY

Shaping the future in STEM, education and politics

By Dr. Sharah Zaab
THE BLACK LENS

Throughout history, women have played a pivotal role in shaping societies, yet their contributions have often been overlooked. From groundbreaking discoveries in STEM fields to leading political movements and transforming education, women have made an indelible mark on the world. Today, their influence is more recognized and celebrated than ever, as they continue to break barriers and inspire future generations. Teaching children about these accomplishments is essential in fostering an inclusive society where all individuals, regardless of gender or race, feel empowered to pursue their ambitions.

Women in STEM: Innovating for a Better Tomorrow

The fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) have long been dominated by men, but women have persistently fought for their place, making groundbreaking contributions that have changed the world. Ada Lovelace, often considered the first computer programmer, laid the foundation for modern computing in the 19th century. In more recent times, women like Dr. Katherine Johnson, whose calculations were crucial to NASA's space missions, have demonstrated the invaluable role of female scientists and mathematicians. African American women have played a crucial role in STEM advancements. Dr. Mae Jemison became the first African American woman in space, inspiring future generations of Black women in science and engineering. Hidden Figures such as Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, and Katherine Johnson were instrumental in NASA's success, breaking barriers in mathematics and aerospace engineering. Despite these achievements, women remain underrepresented in STEM careers. However, initiatives such as Girls Who Code and Women in Engineering are working to close the gender gap by providing mentorship, scholarships, and opportunities for young women. Teaching all children about these trailblazers ensures that young girls see themselves reflected in the field and young boys understand the importance of

inclusivity in innovation.

Women in Education: Shaping Young Minds

Education has been a key area where women have made profound contributions, both as educators and reformers. Figures such as Malala Yousafzai, who advocates for girls' education despite facing immense adversity, and Maria Montessori, whose revolutionary teaching methods continue to influence modern education, illustrate the transformative power of women in this field. African American women have long been advocates for education and equality. Mary McLeod Bethune founded the Bethune-Cookman Institute, providing educational opportunities for Black students. Septima Poinsette Clark, known as the "Mother of the Movement," played a vital role in the Civil Rights Movement through literacy and citizenship education programs. Women educators and researchers have continuously worked to improve education systems worldwide. In many countries, female teachers are leading the charge in ensuring access to quality education, particularly for marginalized communities. Teaching students about these influential women fosters an understanding of why equal access to education benefits society as a whole and why every child deserves a chance to learn and succeed.

Women in Politics: Leading the Way

The political landscape has historically been male-dominated, but women have steadily carved out a space for themselves, becoming powerful leaders and advocates for change. Pioneers such as Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the world's first female prime minister, and Angela Merkel, who served as Germany's chancellor for 16 years, have demonstrated that women are more than capable of leading nations. African American women have been pivotal in politics. Shirley Chisholm became the first African American woman elected to Congress and later ran for president, paving the way for future leaders. Kamala Harris shattered barriers by becoming the first female Vice President of the United States, as well as the first Black and South Asian woman to hold the position. Activists such as Stacey Abrams continue to



By Dr. Sharah Zaab
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



champion voting rights and fair elections. In the U.S., figures like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a dynamic force in Congress, have broken barriers and inspired young women to pursue political careers. Women politicians often bring attention to issues such as healthcare, education, and social welfare, which have far-reaching impacts on communities. Ensuring that students learn about these leaders helps develop a generation that values diverse representation and understands the significance of equal opportunities in governance.

The Road Ahead

While progress has been made, challenges remain. Gender bias, wage gaps, and underrepresentation in leadership roles continue to hinder full equality. However, with continued advocacy, mentorship, and policy changes, the future looks promising for women in all sectors. Women's contributions to STEM, education, and politics have been transformative and continue to shape a more equitable and progressive world. As society moves forward, it is essential to recognize and support women's achievements, ensuring that their impact continues to inspire future generations. Moreover, integrating these accomplishments into educational curricula reinforces the necessity of inclusivity and equality, showing all children that they have a role in shaping the future, no matter their background. Women have always played an important role in society and risen above a disenfranchised system. African American women's contributions have been in all areas of society, helping to shape history and push the boundaries of progress for future generations. Teaching these histories empowers future leaders and underscores the importance of creating opportunities for everyone to thrive.

CULTURE

ANYLA'S TAKE

NO MORE 'ABOUT US WITHOUT US'
Why representation is a must

The debate over literature in school curricula has intensified in recent years, particularly regarding texts like “To Kill a Mockingbird,” “Of Mice and Men,” “Things Fall Apart” and “Their Eyes Were Watching God.” While these works have long been celebrated for their literary merit, they also raise critical questions about the representation of marginalized communities. The call to reevaluate these texts is not about erasing history but about ensuring that Black experiences and histories are accurately and respectfully portrayed. Now, amid growing efforts to remove Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives from education, the fight for authentic representation in literature is more urgent than ever.

Historically, literature taught in American schools has been overwhelmingly Eurocentric, shaped by colonial influences that marginalize Black voices. Many so-called classics reinforce racial stereotypes or minimize the depth of Black experiences. “To Kill a Mockingbird,” for example, is often praised for its critique of racial injustice, yet it presents the story primarily through the eyes of a white character, Atticus Finch, perpetuating a “white savior” narrative. While the novel exposes American racism and classism, it simultaneously reinforces the false notion of Black inferiority by centering whiteness as the moral compass.

Advocates for curriculum reform argue that Black stories should be told by Black authors, ensuring authentic representation and avoiding narratives that distort or diminish Black realities. The goal is not to ban literature but to expand the canon to include works that reflect the full spectrum of Black history and culture.

The movement to replace outdated texts with more representative literature has met resistance. Critics argue that classic literature provides essential lessons about historical injustices and fosters critical thinking. They warn that removing these texts could lead to a sanitized version of history, preventing students from grappling with the complexities of race in America.

An alternative approach suggests keeping these books in the curriculum while reframing their teaching. Instead of passively accepting problematic narratives,



By Anyla McDonald
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



educators can facilitate discussions that challenge biases, unpack historical contexts, and introduce counter-narratives by Black authors. This approach encourages critical engagement, empowering students to analyze how race is represented and whose perspectives are prioritized, essentially challenging these narratives.

The push to eliminate DEI from American education threatens progress toward a more inclusive curriculum. Representation matters – not just in literature, but in how history is taught, whose voices are amplified, and what perspectives are deemed worthy of study. Erasing diverse narratives from education does not protect students; it deprives them of the full truth.

A history told incompletely is a dangerous distortion. When the ugly parts of history are removed, what remains is propaganda. True education requires honesty, inclusion, and a commitment to presenting multiple perspectives.

As the conversation around literature and education evolves, one thing remains clear: All students deserve to see themselves reflected in what they learn. A curriculum that fully acknowledges the past – without sugarcoating or erasing difficult truths – enriches society by opening the door for accountability and healing. Advocating for inclusion serves to grow a unified and truly diverse nation. As we are on the brink of seeing what feels to many like the undoing of democracy, understanding the truth about history without eliminating the ugly parts means more now than it ever has before. We must foster a deeper understanding of our shared history. There is just something about that word “ALL.”

The Black Lens news staff contributed to this report.



JESSE TINSLEY/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Justice Forral, left, of Spokane Community Against Racism, speaks to the crowd of protesters gathered Monday in Riverfront Park. The Presidents Day protesters were taking issue with a range of actions by the current federal administration under President Donald Trump, mentioning cutbacks of workers, infringements on certain rights and issues about immigration.

By Anyla McDonald
THE BLACK LENS

Understanding the impact of budget cuts requires examining the historical context of systemic inequities and disproportionality as it pertains to educational and economic development in the Black community.

One crucial area of concern is education. Funding cuts could severely impact post-secondary admissions, financial aid, and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), which play a vital role in covers programs and services aimed at improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged students. Federal funding in education includes:

Title I Funding: Supports schools with a high percentage of low-income students by providing resources for additional instruction, teacher training, and academic interventions.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Funds special education services to ensure students with disabilities receive appropriate education and support.

National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs: Provides free or reduced-price meals to eligible students to address food insecurity.

Teacher and Principal Training (Title II Funds): Supports professional development, recruitment, and retention of educators.

English Language Learners (Title III Funds): Funds programs to assist students with limited English proficiency.

STEM and Career Readiness Grants: Provides funding for technology, science, and workforce development programs.

School Safety and Mental Health Initiatives: Supports initiatives to improve student well-being, such as mental health services, school resource officers, and anti-bullying programs.

Impact Aid Program: Provides financial assistance to school districts that lose revenue due to tax-exempt

federal properties, such as military bases or Native American reservations.

Impact on low socio-economic, minority, and first-generation students: Since Pell grants disproportionately benefit low-income, first-generation, and minority students, funding cuts could widen educational disparities.

Health care is another sector vulnerable to funding cuts. Many Black Americans rely on government-funded programs like Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act for health care access. Significant reductions in these programs would limit access to crucial medical services, leading to poorer health outcomes and increased health disparities. This could exacerbate existing health inequalities, increasing mortality rates and negatively impacting the overall well-being of the Black community.

Economic development initiatives targeted at Black communities are also at risk. Programs aimed at fostering entrepreneurship, job creation, and affordable housing often rely on federal funding. Cuts to these programs could stifle economic growth in Black communities, widening the existing wealth gap and perpetuating economic inequality. The potential loss of jobs and limited access to capital would significantly hinder economic advancement.

Furthermore, the potential impact on criminal justice reform is a critical concern. Funding for community-based programs aimed at reducing crime and recidivism disproportionately benefits Black communities. Budget cuts could undermine these efforts, leading to increased incarceration rates and a further erosion of trust between law enforcement and Black communities. This has far-reaching implications for families and communities already struggling with the legacy of mass incarceration. It can weaken community organizations, reduce social support networks, and limit access to vital services such as mental health care

and substance abuse treatment, contributing to a cycle of social instability and undermines community resilience.

Different perspectives exist on the appropriate level and allocation of government funding. Some argue that a reduced role for government intervention is beneficial for economic growth, while others advocate for increased government investment to address systemic inequalities and promote social justice. The debate often focuses on the balance between fiscal responsibility and the need to address social needs. However, the disproportionate impact of budget cuts on Black Americans is a crucial consideration in this ongoing discussion.

Looking ahead, the potential impact of reduced federal funding on Black Americans in 2025 underscores the urgent need for proactive policymaking and grassroots activism. Investing in education, healthcare, economic development, and criminal justice reform is vital for reducing disparities and promoting social mobility. Ignoring these issues risks exacerbating existing inequalities. Continued engagement from civil rights organizations, policymakers, and concerned citizens will be essential in ensuring that the voices and needs of Black communities are heard and addressed. The future of racial justice in America depends on a commitment to equity and a rejection of policies that perpetuate systemic disadvantage.

How to Act: Contact Your legislators and tell them what you oppose:

- The legislative hotline: (800) 562-6000
- Text “Action” to 48744 to reach your senators
- U.S. Capitol Switchboard: (202) 244-3121
- Send an email to your Washington state Legislature by scanning the accompanying QR code.

The Black Lens news staff contributed to this report.

Unsung hero Dorothy Cotton was beacon of hope

By Anesu Whacha
SHADLE PARK HIGH SCHOOL

Dorothy Cotton was not just a woman; she was a force of nature. A tireless activist, a brilliant strategist, and a beacon of hope, she stood shoulder to shoulder with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., becoming the highest-ranking woman in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the only woman in his inner circle. Her contributions to the Civil Rights Movement are immeasurable, and her impact on women's lives profound. We owe her a debt of gratitude for her tireless work and unwavering commitment to justice.

Imagine a woman, born into the harsh realities of the Great Depression, losing her mother at a young age, and raised by an abusive father. Many would have succumbed to such adversity. But Dorothy Cotton? She channeled that hardship into an unwavering determination to fight for justice. She put herself through college, working as a housekeeper, a testament to her incredible work



CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
Dorothy Cotton

ethic and resilience. This was a woman who knew the value of hard work and did not quit, ever.

Dorothy Cotton wasn't just present during the Civil Rights Movement; she was a driving force. As the SCLC's Educational Director, she ran the Citizenship Education Program (CEP) for twelve years. Empowering disenfranchised African Americans to register to vote, she helped give them a voice in a society that tried to silence them. She didn't just teach; she ignited a fire within people, a desire to participate in their own liberation. She understood that education was power, and she shared

that power generously. She did so much to empower individuals.

Cotton's influence extended to some of the most pivotal moments of the movement. She helped organize the Children's Crusade in Birmingham, training young people in non-violent protest techniques. Imagine the courage it took to send children into the face of such brutal opposition. Dorothy Cotton instilled in them not only the tactics of protest but also the unwavering belief in their own power to change the world. She was a mentor, a guide, and an inspiration. She did so much for the movement.

Her bravery was unparalleled. Organizing night marches in St. Augustine, Florida, she even led a “wade-in” at a segregated beach with local children. The horrific beating she endured, resulting in permanent hearing damage, only underscored her commitment. She never wavered, never backed down. This was a woman who put her own safety on the line for the cause of equality. She did so much for equality.

Dorothy Cotton's relationship with Dr. King was one of deep respect and trust. She traveled with him to Oslo when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize, a symbol of her integral role in his work. She was by his side, a constant source of strength and support. The pain of his assassination was a wound that never truly healed, but even in grief, she continued to champion his vision.

After leaving the SCLC, she continued her work in community organizations and at Cornell University, always advocating for social change. Even in retirement, she opened a consulting firm focused on the same principles that had guided her life's work. She did so much for her community.

Though she passed away in June of 2018, The Dorothy Cotton Institute (DCI), founded in 2008, remains her legacy. Its mission is “to inspire, educate, train, nurture and support people for effective civic participation and human rights leadership; to collaborate with others, locally and globally, to build networks

What Is Beloved Community?

“In a Beloved Community, people live and work with recognition of the connectedness of all sentient beings and the natural world. Everyone feels a sense of belonging and connection to each other. As others are welcomed, there is acceptance and appreciation for variety in cultural expression and spiritual practices. There is an overarching desire to affirm and support everyone's right and expectation to be supported in their journey toward a peaceful and fulfilled life. Everyone, from children to elders, feels support in pursuing goals toward their life work. The love ethic prevails and is manifest in all aspects of community life.”

Taken from the Dorothy Cotton Institute at dorothycottoninstitute.org

and communities of civil and human rights leaders; to explore, share and promote practices that inspire and transform individuals and communities, opening new pathways to peace, justice and healing.” Using pedagogy anchored in non-violence and Beloved Community, which was a major tenet of the American Civil Rights Movement, The DCI taps into effective collaboration, and a drive and passion for justice as a pathway to solve the problem of racism and bigotry. Part of the vision of DCI is “The full realization of a just and peaceful Beloved Community in which all

people understand, respect, protect and exercise full human rights and participate effectively in making democracy work.” Dorothy Cotton's legacy is one of courage, resilience, and unwavering dedication to justice. She impacted countless women's lives by demonstrating the power of their voices and their ability to lead. She showed the world that there were no limits to who can stand at the forefront of change. She was a role model, a pioneer, and an inspiration. Dorothy Cotton was a force of nature, and we can draw motivation from the testimony of her life.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

FUNDING

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the progress that has been made over the last 16 months.

“So when they issued out the \$200 million, it was over a two year course that we had time to be able to spend this money, not even to mention that, eight months into it, is when they started rolling out the funds,” Spencer said. “So, we really never had a full two years to be able to try to spend down this money. Now we are almost done in June 2025. And probably more than half of the money is still there.”

According to a Feb. 6 article in the Washington State Standard, newly elected Gov. Bob Ferguson will veto any state budget bill that does not include \$100 million for hiring additional law enforcement.

“The idea doesn’t sit well with Black members of the state Legislature,” the article reads. “So when they met with Ferguson and his aides last week, they said if there’s going to be \$100 million to beef up the ranks of law enforcement, there should be at least as much to shore up social services and other supportive programs in communities.”

Rep. Kristine Reeves, D-Federal Way, who chairs the 14-member Washington Legislative Black Caucus, of which newly elected Rep. Natasha Hill is now a member, shared in the Standard, “We want to make it clear that we are equally prepared to have hard conversations about how we prioritize community investments.” The Caucus is making the case to resupply the funds for the depleted CRP.

Discontinuing the CRP is just one example of the broader austerity measures being implemented at both state and federal levels. Many nonprofits that rely on federal funding are now scrambling to find alternative sources of support.

This move by Gov. Ferguson has raised concerns given the history of excessive force and systemic racism within policing institutions.

Additional compounding questions are: Who will be hired in law enforcement, will there be positive representation? Will police misconduct be uprooted and dismantled? What avenues towards justice will be implemented in disenfranchised populations? What measures will be done to decriminalize poverty? What does accountability look like for law enforcement as the idea of immunity has already been threatened within the national narrative? There are dangerous historical parallels here.

Underscored is the double standard of how resources are allocated with working-class and marginalized communities bearing the brunt of budget cuts. This is not just a Black issue – this is a class issue, with poor people as the lowest common denominator. The result? A humanitarian crisis that will lead to stagnation and decline.

Camerina Zorrozuza, also a co-founder of the Way To Justice, echoes Spencer’s sentiments. Programs that help people reintegrate into society, secure housing, and find stable employment are disappearing, while policies that criminalize poverty are gaining momentum. The presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in schools, churches, and hospitals is another alarming development, increasing the vulnerability of immigrant communities and those with minor criminal records. Zorrozuza expressed concern about the disruption all the recent upheaval is having on communities. The Way To Justice works directly with people who have low level offenses.

“People living in poverty who may have shoplifting on their record; they’ve been here for years and suddenly this criminalization is making them subject to removal,” Zorrozuza said. “I’m afraid that we’re going to create a whole new bucket of harms, right?”

Spencer and Zorrozuza are calling for the BIPOC community to take action.

For many, this moment is a continuation of historical patterns. Every time marginalized communities make progress, systemic forces work to reverse those gains, and the end goal remains the same: the erasure and deprioritization of marginalized communities under the pretense of fiscal responsibility.

The widening wealth divide highlights a double standard in how economic burdens are distributed. While the wealthiest continue to accumulate resources, working-class individuals face increasing barriers to upward mobility. Government decisions that gut public services while protecting elite interests reinforce class stratification. Systems working in tandem to thwart upward mobility of the most vulnerable are nothing new and complacency is a luxury.

Change will require collective action. The active involvement of allies who are not directly impacted will help move the needle. Whether through grassroots activism, policy advocacy, or direct intervention, the fight for equity must be relentless. We are in a battle over who is deemed worthy of investment and protection.

Spencer’s sense of urgency for those who believe in justice commands our attention: “Even with all the uncertainty, the call to action is, one, that we stand in solidarity with each other. Not only do we stand in solidarity with each other, but we put our money where our mouth is. That means moving resources, that means whatever it is that you can give to organizations doing this work, then give it. That means that we get together in a space and a place to be able to say ‘no more. We are not going back.’”

“We need to be able to support each other in whichever capacity that we will. We have to hold the government accountable, we cannot continue to move forward without holding them accountable. The call to action is: Will you stand with us to be able to do that?”

RAE

Continued from 1

stories behind her songs.

“This one is more musical, but it gives you some details that you may or may not have already known. It’s not heavily detailed, but it lets you know about her relationships, her activism, and what she was writing while she was writing it,” Rae said.

For Rae, the tour is a timely reminder of Franklin’s role in the civil rights movement.

“It’s history repeating itself in some ways,” she said. “Aretha wasn’t just fighting for change in public – she was deeply involved behind the scenes, having conversations in her home, strategizing with those on the front lines. And now, we’re still singing ‘A Change is Gonna Come’ and waiting for change to come.”

In a world where music is often a reflection of the times, Rae believes that art carries a responsibility to elevate culture. In today’s entertainment landscape, she shares that music is not always produced with the intention of growth.

“When we sing Aretha’s music, it’s a reminder of what great music does,” she said. “It unites us, it inspires us, and it makes us feel.”

One of the most important lessons Rae has learned from Aretha Franklin’s story is the power of owning one’s narrative.

“Owning your story means sitting with what’s happening but not letting it control you,” she said.

Reflecting on her experience performing for a variety of different audiences, Rae points out that Franklin’s music has always had universal appeal and realizes the power that music has to bring people together. She emphasizes the impact of sound on the body and mind.

“Sound waves do different things to your body,” Rae said. “Music should help you grow, not control how you think.”

Beyond her music, Rae deeply admires Franklin’s resilience as a no-nonsense woman who suffered no fools. She reflects on how the singer learned how to keep on going when she lost her mother at a young age.

“She had every reason to shut down after losing her mother, but she pushed through.” She said, “It’s the painful moments that we go through that allow us to present the song the way that we do.”

As an artist and a mother herself, she relates to Franklin’s perseverance.

“I’ve gone through a lot – losing loved ones, balancing my career and motherhood – but I keep pushing,” Rae said.



COURTESY OF BEST OF BROADWAY

Cristina Rae, center, in the Broadway touring production of “R.E.S.P.E.C.T.”

IF YOU GO

‘R.E.S.P.E.C.T.’

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 7

WHERE: First Interstate Center for the Arts, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.

TICKETS: \$50-90; online at broadwayspokane.com or through TicketsWest

“Sometimes we move so fast that we don’t allow ourselves to feel. But we need to process our emotions, sit with them, and then move forward.”

When asked what “R.E.S.P.E.C.T.” means to her, Rae shares that we have to be gentle to ourselves; when we do this, we show others how to treat us.

“That also starts with us realizing that we are not machines. We are human beings with emotions.”

Hailing from Nashville, Tennessee, Rae has been immersed in the performing arts since childhood. Classically trained, Rae shared, “I’ve been singing, acting, and dancing since I was 7.”

“My first professional show was ‘The Wiz’ at the Ryman Auditorium, and my Broadway debut was ‘The Wiz’ on Broadway.”

She has also won Amateur Night at the Apollo twice and gained national recognition on America’s Got Talent. But her aspirations don’t stop there.

“For the past three years, I’ve been part of albums that were nominated for Grammys – either singing or writing,” Rae said. “I know I’m getting

closer to having my own Grammy, and that’s my goal. I could have certificates that say you were a part of a project that was nominated for a Grammy, but I want that when it says ‘Cristina Rae was nominated for a Grammy.’ “

Excitedly, Rae shares that an EGOT is on her aspirations radar.

“I’m just waiting for the doors to open for those moments, but more than anything, I want to do all of this with my baby next to me because I have an 8-year-old son and he can sing his butt off.”

Rae aims to never go home empty, making sure that her talent is completely absorbed in every show, reinforcing her understanding that she is a vessel. She eagerly moves towards her next level as she leads with diligence and gratitude.

As the “R.E.S.P.E.C.T.” tour makes its way to Spokane, Christina Rae is not just honoring the legacy of Aretha Franklin – she’s carrying it forward. With her powerful performance and unwavering passion, she reminds us that music is more than entertainment; it’s a force for change, unity, and love.

UBUNTU

Continued from 1

truly powerful. It is in this space, that particularity arises. To understand what particularity means, I’m going to describe a typical “victim-offender dialogue” (VOD) scenario.

After pre-conferencing to assess readiness, facilitators decide that a restorative conference is warranted. During the dialogue, the person harmed is invited to tell their story, uninterrupted – to detail their feelings, fears, and what life is now like due to the impacts of the harm. During the conversation, the person who caused harm – so long as they are willing and capable of taking meaningful accountability – listens, deeply, to those feelings, fears, and impacts. They are asked to contemplate the reality they had a hand in negatively shaping. Throughout the encounter, they are also given many opportunities to speak. To explain, not excuse, their actions. To flesh out details from their life – the causes, conditions, and lessons learned – which steered them toward their behaviors and decisions. If it feels right, facilitators can then guide the parties to consider together what repair could look like. Jointly, they may even devise a plan to help ameliorate the harm caused and those problematic causes and conditions underlying those hurtful choices.

Particularity is the process of ventilating oneself in a fairly complete, fuller, and more nuanced way. Dialogue is the slow, deliberate process – the container that gets us there – respecting the participants enough to allow them to do so while supporting all co-existent truths throughout this unpacking. Well-facilitated dialogues create space capable of simultaneously holding multiple realities and multi-layered stories.

We are neither all good nor all bad. We are not the worst thing we have ever done. Each of us is com-

More readings

To read more about the connection between ubuntu and restorative justice, see: “Dirk J. Louw: The African concept of ubuntu and restorative justice” (Chapter 9 from Handbook of Restorative Justice: A Global Perspective (2006)

posed of a dynamic story. Louw summarizes the concept pretty succinctly, stating: “[Dialogue] vents harmful emotions, repairs relationships, and importantly, challenges any stereotypes that the partners in dialogue may harbor. Such dialogue epitomizes the conduct prescribed by ubuntu... (which) inspires us to expose ourselves to others, to encounter the difference of their humanness so as to inform and enrich our own.”

Individuality: Dearest Genter Readers, please prepare yourselves for this concept because the name of this concentricity implies one thing, but Louw essentially asserts another. He begins discussing “individuality” by critiquing the French philosopher Descartes’ best known quip “I think therefore I am.” He explains that “(U)buntu directly contradicts the Cartesian conception of individuality in terms of which the individual or self can be conceived without thereby necessarily conceiving the others.” To Africans, the phrase “I think therefore I am,” reflects an incomplete philosophy of being. Rather, “I participate therefore I am,” is a better indication of African conceptions of individuality. Ubuntu theory – much like the North American Aboriginal ethos from which restorative justice praxis partially derived also – recognizes that while individuals exist, we exist together, in an inescapable interdependent web. That the actions one takes inevitably affects another. That we cannot raise ourselves into being. That we ultimately become ourselves through interactions with others. “Ubuntu unites the self and the world in a peculiar web of reciprocal relations in which subject and object become indistinguishable.”

Historicity: Finally, we discuss the importance of “respecting the historicity of the other,”

the idea that we are never finished products but works-in-progress. And although we are certainly products of the past, we have malleable futures. Louw continues the comparison, bringing all three concepts together, concluding: “An ubuntu perception is never fixed or rigidly closed, but adjustable or open-ended. It allows the other to be, to become...A process of self-realization through others.” Restorative processes also recognize this, tending to create spaces to unearth the past but through the lens of a forward-focused directive.

Inevitably, as we navigate this thing we call life, we will both cause and be on the receiving end of harm. This type of pain is an inevitable part of being human. Though we may want to wish away hurtful moments from our histories, we simply cannot. In the end, whether consciously/healthy or not, we will all find ways to bear both the harms we’ve inflicted and received. Ubuntu and restorative justice ideologies provide constructive pathways. Potential resolutions via dialogic exchanges that slow everything down, allowing us to be more human. In a well facilitated process, we can deconstruct who we are. We trade our precious unique stories of self. And through this exchange, we might learn. We might come to know ourselves a little better. Who were you when/who might you become after you were hurt by somebody? Who were you when/who might you become after you caused harm to another? And who might we evolve into if we earnestly and honestly face those questions together?

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THE PROBLEM WITH WESTERN FEMINISM

As a teenage girl living in a patriarchal society, I often encounter conversations about feminism and the misconceptions surrounding it. Many negative comments stem from the belief that feminism promotes man-hating or misogyny – the opposite of misogyny. However, according to Britannica, feminism is simply “the belief in social, economic, and political equality among the sexes.” It began as a movement advocating for women’s voting rights, gender and reproductive rights, and equal economic opportunities. Yet, modern criticisms often focus on misconceptions rather than addressing the actual issues within Western feminism.

Western feminism primarily centers on the experiences of women in Western societies, often focusing on the struggles of white women while overlooking the diverse experiences of women of color and those from different cultural backgrounds. Historically, Western feminist movements achieved significant successes, but progress seemed to stall once white women gained freedom from many aspects of Western patriarchy. This left behind women of color who faced not only sexism and misogyny but also racism, ethnic cleansing, war, cultural erasure, and other systemic oppressions.

Today, while some feminists celebrate their privileges, countless women worldwide are still fighting for basic human rights. The issue with Western feminism is that it often stems from a place of privilege, leading to ignorance and exclusion. When white women in the West began their fight for equality, they primarily confronted sexism and patriarchy. In contrast, Black women and women of color faced compounded struggles, including segregation, lynching, genocide, and racial discrimination—on top of sexism and misogyny. They could not prioritize gender equality when they were still denied basic human rights. Entrenched in this paradigm is anti-blackness, a visceral assault against Black identity, both covert and overt, which diminishes the worth of Black bodies, propagating global dehumanization.



By Nikita Habimana
NAACP YOUTH COUNCIL CONTRIBUTOR



Elma Akob highlighted this issue, stating, “The problem with feminism is that it is individualistic. It tries to be representative of an entire gender group,” ignoring the cultural, racial, and ideological differences among women. Western feminism often caters to the needs of white women while claiming to represent all women. In doing so, it partners with patriarchal systems that continue to oppress women of color and non-Western women.

For example, Western feminism frequently ignores issues like misogyny, the sexual violence against women in Congo, the suffering of women in Palestine, the displacement of girls in Sudan, the oppression of women in Afghanistan, the racial disparities in maternal mortality rates in the U.S., and the 230 million girls affected by female genital mutilation worldwide.

Fannie Lou Hamer said, which was reinforced by Maya Angelou, that none one of us can be free until we are all free. To achieve true equality, we must advocate for those who cannot speak for themselves and see outside of our own circumstances. Silence makes us complicit in ongoing injustices. Instead of continuing with Western feminism, we should embrace intersectional feminism, which acknowledges that oppression is multifaceted – shaped by race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and age. Intersectional feminism recognizes that women experience sexism differently, moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach to gender equality.

More Information

Read more on “Western-centric feminism” on Fiveable, at simplypsychology.org/intersectional-feminism.html or on YouTube by searching “The Dangers of Western Feminism to African Women.”

YOUTH CONNECTION

NO SHRINKING VIOLETS

*Ferris High School
walkout highlights BSU’s
stance on anti-hate*

By Jetaime Thomas and
Heavyn Williams
FERRIS HIGH SCHOOL

On Thursday, Feb. 13, approximately 100 students participated in a walkout protest at Ferris High School. The protest was in defiance of the treatment of marginalized students within Ferris by staff, and students. It was fueled by outright harassment and the overt racism that some students have been facing in the past several months.

What became evident that it wasn’t just Black students who were being targeted – other minority students were also facing continuous hate and disrespect. This serious issue deeply affected those targeted but also has an indirect effect on the student body. Jetaime Thomas, the president of the Black Student Union (BSU), and Heavyn Williams, the vice president, took the initiative to plan, organize, and facilitate the march. The entire planning process took place within 24 hours. Starting from Regal

Street and circling the perimeter of Ferris, students marched, filling the streets and halls – not with the usual hostility that had become all too familiar, but with love and acceptance for people of all backgrounds. This peaceful protest lasted approximately three hours. Throughout the demonstration, students were taunted, laughed at, pointed at, and filmed. Protesters, however, responded with kindness, love, and patience – qualities they themselves have not always been afforded.

We have been conditioned to tolerate constant disrespect and hate, told that we should have thicker skin, that we shouldn’t let it affect us, that those who came before us had it worse. And yet, we still carry the weight of that historical struggle. We should not have to harden ourselves for the comfort of others. Yes, we are strong, but we shouldn’t be fighting the same battles that generations before us already fought.

It is 2025, and we are



COURTESY

Students protest inside Ferris High School on Feb. 13.

still fighting for the same rights and respect that our ancestors fought for decades ago. Let that sink in – hundreds of years later, and the struggle persists. Ferris High School’s slogan is “I belong, you belong, we belong,” but right now, that statement does not feel true for many. However, the unity displayed by the students who participated in this protest is a testament to the power of solidarity. The jeers that were hurled at protesters further show why this protest was absolutely necessary, symptoms



of a nasty problem that should not be unchecked. Together, these students demonstrated love and support, setting an example of hope for our community and our future.

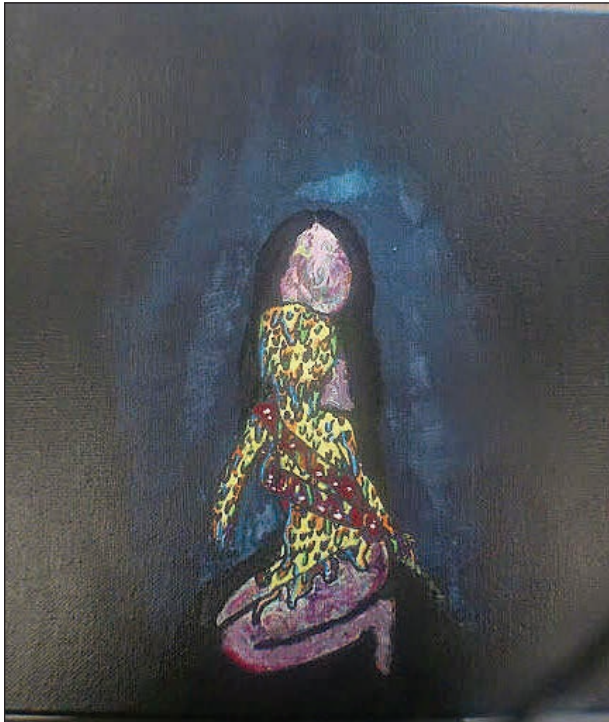
‘Hard to let go’ represents grief, loss

By Stori Taylor
THE BLACK LENS
YOUTH CONTRIBUTOR

“Hard to let go” is a painting I made and it’s about the heavy feeling of grief of losing someone, not exactly sure of how to let go because of how long you’ve held on. Grief is an intricate tapestry of emotions, a profound response to loss that can leave one feeling isolated in their pain. It manifests not just as an emotional reaction but as a complete experience that penetrates every aspect of life—mentally, physically, and spiritually. To understand what grief feels like is to embark on a journey with the shadows of sorrow and the flickers of hope that emerge in its wake. Grief does not reside solely in the heart and mind, it often reverberates throughout the body. Letting go during grief is an incredibly challenging and often painful process. As we navigate the overwhelming emotions of loss, the idea of releasing our attachment can feel like an act of betrayal. The memories, moments, and love shared create a profound bond that lingers, making it difficult to imagine life without them. Reminders such as a favorite song, a shared

place, a familiar scent; these can stir waves of longing, pulling us back into the depths of our sorrow. Grief intertwines with our identity, and the thought of moving forward may evoke fear of forgetting or dishonoring the person we’ve lost. The struggle between holding on and allowing ourselves to heal can leave us feeling trapped in a cycle of heartache, as we yearn to preserve the essence of our loved one while grappling with the reality of the absence.

The dread of holding on when you must let go. It started with my father. I met him when I was in preschool. That day was confusing but happy. He was in my life until his death, when I was in seventh grade. I remember him during those years. We would bond by him teaching me how to box or watching him cook/bake our favorites or watch our favorite genre of movies or hearing him sing or play basketball or go shoe shopping – I remember a lot. Memories of hugging him a lot, and his silliness continue to make me smile. Memories of him chasing me and my sister around the house pretending to scare us just to make us laugh. After he passed, I thought I kept seeing and hearing



STORI TAYLOR

“Hard to let go,” by Stori Taylor

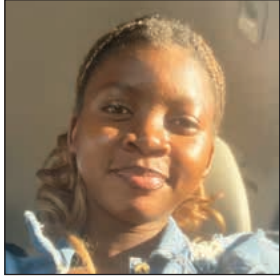
him wherever I went. Once, he came to me in a dream to let me know he was okay and that everything was alright. It brought me comfort but it also kept me holding on for a bit because I wanted to see and hug him just one more time. One. More. Time. I wasn’t ready to let go, because at the same time when he passed, it felt like I’d only known him for minutes instead of years.

Grief isn’t easy and

it’s hard to let go. Especially when that person had a really important role in your life. Healing takes a long time. As we go through the range of emotions the next thing you know, through the hard times, you start to think of their beauty and it will bring you peace and comfort. The memories you had with them will be your strength and joy, and in time you will laugh even when you want to cry.

Microaggressions are unseen wounds

Education is often described as the great equalizer, but within the walls of many schools, systems of quiet segregation continue to exist. One of the most visible yet overlooked ways this happens is through English Language Development (ELD) programs. While these programs are meant to support students who are learning English, they often act as a form of academic isolation, placing students in separate classes for years with little opportunity to integrate fully into mainstream education. Similarly, other educational practices, such as quilting projects, can expose divisions within student populations, reflecting deeper social and racial divides. Beyond structural segregation, students also face microaggressions, subtle but harmful comments and behaviors that reinforce stereotypes



By Daniella Musesambili
SHADLE PARK HIGH SCHOOL



and alienation. Together, these factors create an educational experience where not all students are treated equally, even if the system claims otherwise.

English Language Development (ELD) programs are designed to help students who are non-native English speak-

ers acquire fluency. However, in many cases, these programs unintentionally become long-term academic barriers rather than stepping stones. Many students are placed in ELD tracks early and remain there for years, separated from their English-speaking peers. Research shows that this can lead to lower expectations, reduced access to advanced coursework, and social isolation. Instead of helping students integrate, these programs often trap them in a cycle of linguistic segregation, making it harder for them to develop confidence in their English skills and fully participate in academic and extracurricular activities.

Moreover, these divisions often align with racial and socioeconomic lines. Many ELD students come from immigrant families and communities of color, reinforcing a

school culture where certain groups are perceived as “outsiders.” The longer students remain in ELD programs, the more they feel disconnected from the rest of the school, forming an invisible but powerful barrier that limits their opportunities.

Even outside structured programs and classroom projects, many students face microaggressions—subtle but harmful comments or actions that reinforce stereotypes. ELD students, for example, often hear phrases like:

- “Your English is really good for someone like you.”
- “Where are you really from?”
- “You don’t even have an accent—wow!”

These statements, though sometimes meant as compliments, send a message that they are not truly part of the mainstream student body.

A poem: ‘Separate Desks, Silent Walls’

I sit where they place me, a different room,
They say it helps, but I still feel the gloom.
The words on the page, the voices so fast,
I wonder how long this label will last.
My quilt square is stitched, a story untold,
Not bright with adventures, not lined with gold.
They smile as they place it, a pattern so neat,
But somehow my piece never looks complete.
“Where are you from?”—a question so light,
Yet why does it feel like I’m not “said” right?
A laugh at my name, a stare at my skin,
A door to belong—but they won’t let me in.
So here we remain, behind different doors,
Not chains, not bars, but silent wars.
A school of division, a lesson so clear,
That some are still guests, though they’ve studied here.

Similarly, students from underrepresented communities may experience microaggressions tied to their cultural backgrounds, economic status, or even the assumption that they are not as academically capable as their peers.

Over time, these small acts of exclusion add

up, affecting students’ self-esteem, participation, and overall educational experience. When schools fail to recognize or address microaggressions, they allow an environment where certain students feel constantly othered, reinforcing the very divisions that education is supposed to erase.

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

DRAINING THE SWAMP?

THE INDOCTRINATION OF AMERICAN GREATNESS

IN HER WORDS

A national reset devoid of accountability for social and political actions that entrapped some citizens under a harness of complicit classism and racialized decision making at its inception cannot now be shifted to “non-racialism” without contending with how the game was rigged from the outset. And by “contending with” I don’t mean simply acknowledging.

Non-racial ideology only disguises dominance that was established and curated by a ruling class who advanced economically through centuries of preferential policies that let them in and locked others out –by design. To act as if civil rights, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts are responsi-

ble for present day inequality is gaslighting. It is lying by omission. Making the solution to a historical problem the new problem is diabolical. But so is racism, so the shoe fits.

Identity politics is encoded in the fabric of America, and those who are at its mercy did not write these codes. Those who feel suddenly marginalized by identity politics need to take a long walk down memory lane. There is a compelling reason why the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor in Nazi Germany was inspired by Jim Crow. American racism was the case study for successful disenfranchisement and we need to stop acting like



By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS EDITOR



this has not had a serious impact on social order to date. Colonization, segregation, apartheid–these devices were strategic and intricate, cre-

ated to have a lasting impact, forecasting a social order that would outlive its predecessors, in favor of its ancestors. When framers build, they design blueprints that will withstand the test of time; they build with intention. Christian nationalism has perpetuated hypocrisy, cultural elitism, and piety, usurping real righteousness with a thirst for power cloaked in morality, selective outrage, and manipulative moral rhetoric, a wolf in sheep’s clothing to put patriotism rooted in exclusion, extermination, and exploitation on a pedestal. A new iteration of those ancient Brood of Vipers.

Nationalism that chooses to deny actions that shaped a caste system that dares to be dismantled by inserting neo-colonization tactics is

a mind game. If ethics mean anything, then a foundational rebuild takes all transgressions into account and doesn’t select which ethics matter more. The Declaration of Independence is romanticized as a bastion of heroism and glory, so how did we get here? For whom was it intended? Words are futile without action and ideals can be duplicitous when fidelity does not carry justice. Plausible deniability is the antithesis of the words so many revere as the strength of this nation.

A rebuild is overdue, this time with a different sense of humanity than that which cemented this myth of greatness. Repeating an old model under new force is nothing more than reinvesting in a distorted and dishonest interpretation of liberty and justice for all.

IN HIS WORDS



GETTY IMAGES

An aerial shot of Coki Point, St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Virgil, a Black man from St. Thomas, a part of the U.S. Virgin Islands, had just experienced classism growing up. Only after moving to the U.S. at 20 did the color of his skin come into question.

VESTIGES OF COLONIZATION

By Lucas Cahow
THE BLACK LENS

Virgil, a Black man from St. Thomas, a part of the U.S. Virgin Islands, had just experienced classism growing up. Only after moving to the U.S. at 20 did the color of his skin come into question. In St. Thomas “we were never looked at because of our race,” he explains, “most of our leaders are black, they look just like me.” Even though Virgil experienced classism and racism separately, both are remnants of European colonialism.

When we think of what colonialism left us, racism usually comes to mind, not classism. But classism is as much a product of colonialism as racism is and can be equally harmful. In Virgil’s experience, it is the French in St. Thomas who benefited from their ancestors. “We call them ‘Frenchies,’” he says, “They are viewed as having a certain class above everybody else.” Though the French in particular never colonized Virgil’s birthplace outright, they did migrate from a French Caribbean island 130 miles to the south called St. Barthelemy (LA times). Virgil notes that, “they monopolized the fishing industry and have their own dedicated part of town.” Throughout generations, the French community benefited from their monopoly, creating class disparities. Virgil recognizes that “there is the other side which are the descendants of the slaves. They have to deal with a lot of the frustrations of being descendants of (slavery).”

The French didn’t limit themselves to fishing. In Virgil’s experience, “(the French) have a certain amount of leverage, especially with people in positions of power. They look out for their community. What benefited one benefited the whole.” So, the French were able to stay at the top of the hierarchy by looking out for each other. In Virgil’s home town, classism tracing back to colonialism still exists to this day.

At the age of 20, Virgil moved to the U.S., settling in Idaho. When he first got there, “a lot of people said you have to be aware of your surroundings and who you interact with. I was advised not to go north of Boise, McCall, or Lewiston.” Consider the multiple ways that geographic constraint would affect Virgil. Could he look for a job in any of those areas? Could he risk stopping for gas? If his very movement was restricted, would it really be possible for him to have a public voice?

The reality of being a minority in today’s America hit Virgil hard. “Why is it this way?” he asks. “Back home you would have no limitations as to how far you could travel based on who you are.”

Classism and racism are still a reality throughout the Americas. Our colonial history has left a defined legacy, usually benefiting those with a certain heritage. Virgil’s experiences deserve to be heard and recognized as they show the reality of the world we live in. Hopefully we can learn from the past and eventually heal the long lasting wound of colonialism.

FAILED REPAIR

The relationship between class and race

IN HER WORDS

The relationship between social class and race is deeply intertwined, having always existed in close proximity. One influences the other, shaping a legacy of inequality that has historically placed Black Americans in an underclass position. Forced, unpaid labor laid the groundwork for an uphill struggle with no systemic remedy in place to correct the course. This legacy has left an enduring impact, as the structures built on these inequalities have perpetuated cycles of hardship still visible today. Low socioeconomic status continues to limit financial opportunities, access to basic needs, vital human resources, and overall quality of life for many Black Americans. The intersection of race and class serves as a compass for organized disenfranchisement, cycles of poverty, and social exclusion, reinforcing societal hierarchies.

The legacy of colonialism and segregation has created deep-rooted disparities that persist across generations. In the United States, Black Americans and other marginalized racial groups have historically faced institutional barriers to wealth accumulation. These barriers include redlining, exclusion from New Deal policies, denial of earned G.I. Bill entitlements, restricted access to higher education, and discriminatory employment practices. A stark example of this occurred in 1959 when Marion Hood, a Black medical school applicant, received a rejection letter stating: “I am sorry I must write you that we are not authorized to consider for admission a member of the Negro race.”

Today, movements to dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives argue against “reverse discrimination” and anti-American rhetoric. These efforts aim to erase the historical context that created the need for DEI in the first place. The consequence? A supposed “reset” that overlooks the history and behaviors contributing to the racial wealth gap. Studies reveal that job applicants with names perceived as “ethnic” receive fewer callbacks than those with traditionally white-sounding names, even with identical qualifications. This illustrates that old prejudices persist, influencing critical opportunities for social mobility.

Globally, colonial rule has also entrenched racial and ethnic divisions. In



By Z’hanie Weaver
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



South Africa, apartheid enforced racial class hierarchies, concentrating economic power and land ownership among the white minority while restricting resources for the Black majority. Even after the legal end of apartheid, economic disparities continue to hinder social mobility. Similarly, in the U.S., Black households consistently hold lower median wealth compared to white households due to discriminatory housing policies, wage gaps, and unequal access to quality education.

Educational disparities reflect this systemic inequality. Schools in low-income neighborhoods—often predominantly Black—face resource shortages and lower graduation rates, perpetuating the cycle of limited opportunities. Healthcare disparities are also prevalent, as communities impacted by historical disenfranchisement often struggle with financial barriers and systemic biases in medical care. Additionally, racial disparities within the criminal justice system disproportionately impact Black communities, tracing back to Black Codes, slave patrols, and racialized propaganda. Discriminatory policing and sentencing practices further limit economic opportunities and reinforce social class divisions.

Classism and racism are inherently linked. Addressing them requires an honest analysis of their origins and lasting effects. Systemic changes in economic and policy reforms are crucial to dismantling the barriers designed to maintain social imbalances. Ignoring this history and assuming America has moved beyond Jim Crow merely conceals the truth and its lingering consequences, allowing classism to persist in new forms. The narrative of “failed repair” is now used to justify the rollback of DEI initiatives, despite the generational wealth gaps resulting from historical

FAMILY MEETING: TURNING TOWARD LIGHT EVEN WHILE IT’S HARD

We are currently in a time that has many of us angry, disgusted and heartbroken by the state of this country. This place that has professed values it has rarely lived up to in its entirety. Where those who are currently in political power are trying to overwhelm and scare us. This place, that extracts and exhausts at what feels like every turn, that does not tell the truth about itself willingly. A place that our ancestors built but weren’t allowed any of its prosperity or access to its highly espoused ideals without a fight.

Many of us, I imagine, are still processing, still deciding how much we are willing to give and where. I also feel us taking the time we need to address our hurt around the election results. We

are examining the stories we have told ourselves about this place. We are taking the time to clarify our vision. We are resting, healing, thinking. We are within the four walls of our ancestral, community house.

For those that are not quite ready to engage with the larger community just yet, that’s OK. No shame in it. We need people to tend to the house and keep the home fires burning. For those ready to engage, I have a few things to offer. Nothing new of course. These are things we have heard before. Consider this a reminder of blueprints left by our cultural, ancestral fore mothers and fathers.

Every action, however big or small, from tending the fires inside our ancestral four walls to protest, disruption, and civil

disobedience has a place. Every drop feeds the ocean. Take this offering with a grain of salt. Take what interests you, leave the rest. Work from your square.

Turn Towards Life/Joy:

- Take slow, deep breaths from the diaphragm.
- Exercise/movement.
- Eat well, sleep, rest.
- Meditate, pray, chant, sit in silence, whatever your spiritual practice is, do it. Go into nature.
- Feel your emotions, let them move through.
- Make time to appreciate or practice the arts (music, dance, etc.).

Nurture/Build Community:

- See about your people, break bread together, spend time.

- Listen to each other, be curious.
- Build a space of love, truth, protection, humanity, integrity and growth.
- As Adrienne Marie Brown and many have stated, move at the speed of trust. Move from your square to your family of origin or choice to friends and associates to city wide to statewide to nationwide to worldwide. Scale up and down as needed.
- Show up.
- Apply the principles of both/and (it can help hold the tension between divergent ideas).

Action Plans:

- Decide where you spend your money. Boycotts work. Shop local, thrift stores, barter, trade. Support the library.
- Go to a school board, city council meeting or town hall.



By Carla Gordon
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



- Call your local, state and national reps with your concerns.
- Read.
- Learn more about our cultural and national histories.
- Learn a new skill set like sewing, gardening, CPR, fishing, etc.
- Volunteer, support mutual aid networks (a long standing tradition in our ancestry), bail and strike funds.

- Establish a safety plan, build a go bag and shelter in place kit (3 days worth to start, then 3 weeks, then 3 months worth of supplies).
- Recognize propaganda and call it out. Reject it.
- Have dream/ vision sessions (personal and community wide). We need to think about what we want for ourselves and this country.
- Be discerning with your energy.
- Write down what your highest values are, ask those around you to do the same. See if they align.
- Run for office.
- Protest, disrupt, whether through civil disobedience or a conversation that is riddled with disinformation and lies.

No one person needs to do it all. Just do something from your square. We go together. We build together. One drop, one action at a time. Even the rock yields to the flow of water in time. And before you know it we will have laid a new foundation from which to build our new home.

WELLNESS

BREAKING BARRIERS IN HEALTH CARE: A NEW MODEL OF PATIENT-CENTERED CARE

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

Health care in America has long been criticized for its focus on quantity over quality, leaving both patients and providers frustrated. Two medical professionals, ARNP Ebony Graham and Dr. Kayla Navarro, have taken matters into their own hands by launching a direct primary care practice designed to give patients more time, attention, and access to essential care. The impetus for establishing Complete Family Medical and Specialty, located on East 29th Avenue came out of an abundance of concern and compassion.

The Journey to Change

Graham, a former nurse turned nurse practitioner, has been in the medical field for over two decades. “I started off as a CNA, then became an LPN, then an RN, and eventually a nurse practitioner. It took time, but I kept moving forward,” she shared. Dr. Navarro, a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.), has been practicing medicine for over four years post-residency. The two met while working together at Chas Clinics and quickly bonded over their shared frustrations with the traditional health care system.

“We were seeing more and more patients, feeling overwhelmed, and realizing that we weren’t providing the quality care we wanted to,” Dr. Navarro explained. “We started talking about opening our own practice about a year ago, and now here we are.”

A Need for Something Different

Their motivation stemmed from a system that prioritizes numbers over people. “In traditional health care, we are constantly pressured to see more patients in less time,” Dr. Navarro said. “We don’t want to tell patients, ‘You can only address one concern today.’ Our philosophy as D.O.s is about treating the whole person – body, mind, and spirit.”

This approach led them to the direct primary care (DPC) model, a membership-based system that removes the barriers of insurance and billing complexities. Patients pay a flat monthly fee—typically \$100-\$150—and receive unlimited visits, longer consultations, and direct access to their providers.

The Benefits of Direct Primary Care

The DPC model allows patients to receive care without the long wait times that plague traditional systems. “Right now, new patients at major health care providers are waiting up to six months for an appointment,” Graham said. “With us, patients can get in within a day or a week. That’s the access people need.”



COURTESY

ANRP Ebony Graham and Dr. Kayla Navarro, of Complete Family Medical and Specialty.

“We want to be more involved. Working with Dr. Navarro has been revolutionary for both of us because we want to help everybody ... it feels like we are doing the right thing.”

-Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner Ebony Graham

Beyond accessibility, the model fosters deeper patient-provider relationships. “When we can spend 30 to 45 minutes with a patient instead of being rushed through a 10-minute visit, we can educate them on lifestyle changes, nutrition, and prevention,” Graham explained. “That’s how we make a real impact.”

Dr. Navarro also highlighted studies from the UK showing that this model leads to fewer emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and overall better health outcomes. “When patients have direct, timely access to their primary care doctor, they are less likely to end up in the ER for preventable issues.”

Medication and Affordability

A common concern with DPC is the cost of medication. However, patients can still use insurance for prescriptions, and Gra-

ham and Dr. Navarro can order medications at wholesale prices, offering significant discounts. “We also refer patients to discount programs like Cost Plus medications,” Dr. Navarro added.

Bridging the Gap in Marginalized Communities

Recognizing the disparities in health care access for Black and marginalized communities, Graham and Dr. Navarro are committed to outreach and education. “We recently partnered with Shades of Motherhood to provide prenatal and postpartum care, particularly for Black women who are at higher risk for complications like preeclampsia,” Graham shared.

Additionally, they are bringing back an old tradition in health care – home visits. “Home visits are rare nowadays, but we want to meet people where they are. If

someone can’t get to us, we’ll go to them,” she said. Ensuring that all people have adequate access to care is a priority for the pair.

A Message to Future Health Care Workers

Graham, who started as a CNA and worked her way up, offers advice to students interested in health care careers: “You don’t have to have it all figured out at once. Take small steps and keep moving forward. Every milestone – whether it’s becoming a CNA, LPN, or RN – is worth celebrating.” She continues by sharing that surrounding yourself with people who believe in you is a powerful part of thriving in the profession and it builds confidence.

A New Era of Patient-Centered Care

In an industry that often feels impersonal and rushed, Graham and Dr. Navarro are redefining health care by prioritizing relationships, accessibility, and holistic well-being. Their practice is not just a business – it’s a revolution in how care is delivered.

For patients tired of long wait times, insurance headaches, and impersonal visits, this model offers a refreshing alternative: a doctor’s office where quality truly comes first.

Learn more about the services they offer by going to: www.completefamilymedical.com.

The role of diet in mental health for people of color

By Shanel Harris-Rittermann
THE BLACK LENS

As the discussion about mental health grows, it is important to understand how nutrition affects mental well-being, especially in communities of color. Studies show that what we eat impacts our physical health, thinking, mood, and ability to cope with stress. For people of color (POC), who often deal with different social, economic, and cultural challenges, good nutrition can be an intense way to improve mental health.

The Gut-Brain Connection

Emerging studies emphasize the gut-brain axis, illustrating how the gut microbiome impacts mood and cognition through neurotransmitter production, such as serotonin and dopamine. According to Nature Reviews Neuroscience By Cryan, diets high in processed foods and sugars can reduce microbiome diversity and increase the risk of depression and anxiety.

For people of color, access to nutrient-dense foods is often limited by systemic inequities like food deserts. Many Black and Hispanic neighborhoods face a shortage of grocery stores with fresh produce, which results in reliance on unhealthy, processed foods. According to Walker, writing for the Health & Place article, addressing these barriers is important for improving mental health outcomes.

Nutrients That Support Mental Health

Eating key nutrients can significantly improve your mental health. Omega-3 fatty acids in fatty fish and chia seeds can help reduce inflammation and may lessen symptoms of depression. B vitamins are important for energy and brain function; you can find them in leafy greens, beans, and fortified cereals. Magnesium is known as the “calming mineral” because it helps manage stress and improve sleep. You can get magnesium from nuts, seeds, and dark leafy vegetables. Antioxidants in berries, citrus fruits, and dark chocolate help combat oxidative stress linked to depression and anxiety. Lastly, a high-fiber diet promotes gut health by supporting beneficial bacteria, with whole grains, legumes, and vegetables being excellent sources. These nutrients

Learn more from these references

Cryan, J. F., & Dinan, T. G. (2012). Mind-altering microorganisms: The impact of the gut microbiota on brain and behavior. Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 13(10), 701-712. doi:10.1038/nrn3346

Freeman, M. P., Hibbeln, J. R., Wisner, K. L., Watchman, M., & Gelenberg, A. J. (2006). Omega-3 fatty acids: Evidence basis for treatment and future research in psychiatry. Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, 67(12), 1954-1967. doi:10.4088/JCP.v67n1217

Walker, R. E., Keane, C. R., & Burke, J. G. (2010). Disparities and access to healthy food in the United States: A review of food deserts literature. Health & Place, 16(5), 876-884. doi:10.1016/j.healthplace.2010.04.013

can help contribute to a healthier mind and improved emotional well-being.

Cultural Diets and Their Potential

In communities of color, traditional diets, like Afro-Caribbean, Mediterranean, and Asian cuisines, are rich in nutrients and support mental health. Used ingredients like lentils, leafy greens, turmeric, and ginger offer many benefits, like anti-inflammatory properties and brain-boosting benefits. Using these ancestral foodways can help promote mental well-being while also preserving cultural identity.

Conclusion

It is important to consider the cultural, social, and economic factors that influence our diets. A culturally sensitive approach can help POC communities thrive.

I look forward to using what I have learned to empower others as I graduate. I want to inspire people to see food as a way to care for themselves and connect with their roots. Studying holistic nutrition has taught me that wellness is a personal journey influenced by our individual histories and choices. I am dedicated to promoting an inclusive approach to nutrition that respects these differences while striving for health equity for all.

JOIN US IN Celebration OF THESE EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN!

YWCA WOMEN OF ACHIEVEMENT HONOREES



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CARL MAXEY RACIAL & SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARD

For event details please visit ywcaspokane.org/woa



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SPOKANE

SHADES OF MOTHERHOOD NETWORK

STRONG WOMEN, DEEP ROOTS

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH HONORS TRAILBLAZERS, PIONEERS AND CHANGEMAKERS

I always am honored to celebrate women, and March is considered National Women's History Month which includes celebrating the achievements of women of all backgrounds, including African American women.

March is a time to celebrate the incredible contributions of women – past, present, and future. From trailblazers who shattered glass ceilings to the everyday heroes who shape communities with love, wisdom, and courage, women continue to inspire change, uplift societies, and redefine possibilities.

This month, and every month, we honor your achievements, recognize your struggles, and celebrate your limitless potential. Keep shining, keep rising, and keep making history.

This is a time I would like to remember several voices, victories, and visionary leadership of Black women throughout history. It is a call to celebrate resilience, brilliance, and the undeniable impact of Black women in shaping our world.

A Legacy of Power and Progress from the front lines of civil rights battles to the stars above, Black women have fearlessly led movements, shattered barriers, and redefined possibility. Through articles, discussions, and dynamic events, we can reflect on their courage and contributions, ensuring their stories are told, honored, and carried forward.

There are many pioneering women who have made significant contributions. Here, we recognize several great individuals:

Constance Baker Motley – A formidable legal force, she shattered barriers as the first Black woman to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court, championing justice in pivotal civil rights cases.

Mae Carol Jemison – A trailblazing astronaut,



By Stephy Nobles-Beans THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



she made history as the first Black woman in space, proving that boundaries exist only to be broken.

Bessie Coleman – Defying racial and gender barriers, she soared as the first Black female pilot, paving the way for future generations of aviators.

Barbara Jordan – A groundbreaking political leader, she became the first Black woman in the Texas State Senate, amplifying voices that had long been unheard.

Vice President Kamala Harris – A symbol of progress and possibility, she carved a path in history as the first woman and first Black woman to serve as Vice President of the United States.

Shades of Motherhood would like to honor a special Woman of Color who is doing amazing things in our community, a trailblazer and is in partnership with Shades of Motherhood.

She is none other than Nurse Practitioner, Ebony Graham, NP of Complete Care.

Raised in Florida, she always dreamed of becoming a nurse and felt called to this vocation. She became a Certified Nursing Assistant and pursued her LPN. Her life changed after a mission trip to Guatemala and Haiti, and she realized that God wanted

to take her further.

Graham graduated in 2014 and earned a master's in education, taught LPNs and CNAs while pursuing her RN part time at night. In 2017, she graduated from Harding University as a Nurse Practitioner. In 2025 she started her own practice with Dr. Navarro here in Spokane, WA, a dream come true. The goal of her practice is to help as many as they can, celebrating and helping others with a comprehensive approach. We are so honored to collaborate with such an amazing practice and with Nurse Practitioner Ebony Graham.

Here at Shades of Motherhood we take the time to honor incredible women, let us commit to uplifting, recognizing, and supporting the Black women leading today – and those who will inspire the future.

To the Black women who have shaped history, led movements, broken barriers, and uplifted communities—your brilliance, resilience, and power inspire generations. From science to art, activism to leadership, innovation to storytelling, you continue to redefine what is possible.

You are the dream and the hope of the past, the power of the present, and the foundation of the future. Your strength is unmatched, your voices are needed, and your presence is undeniable.

May you always know your worth, walk in your truth, and shine in your greatness. The world is better because of you. Know that Shades of Motherhood Network is here, and we are better because of you. If you are looking for resources, please contact us through our website: theshadesofmotherhoodnetwork.org.

Because when Black women rise, we all rise.

Happy Women's History Month!

CELEBRATING BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK 2025

The art of birth – the journey to liberation

By Shades of Motherhood Network SPECIAL TO THE BLACK LENS

Every year from April 11-17, communities across the country observe Black Maternal Health Week (BMHW), a powerful initiative founded by the Black Mamas Matter Alliance (BMMA) to address the Black maternal health crisis. This week is dedicated to amplifying Black voices, advocating for systemic change, and celebrating holistic, community-driven solutions that support the well-being of Black birthing people.

At The Shades of Motherhood Network, we are proud to continue this tradition with this year's theme: "The Art of Birth – The Journey to Liberation"

In 2025, we are centering maternal mental health and exploring healing solutions through music, movement, and food. Black women's birth experiences are deeply connected to culture, tradition, and community. By reclaiming ancestral practices and creative expression, we aim to redefine maternal health care and empower Black families.

Why Is Black Maternal Health Week Important?

1. Addressing Racial Disparities in Maternal Health
Black women in the U.S. continue to experience higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity due to systemic racism, implicit bias in healthcare, and limited access to culturally competent care. BMHW sheds light on these urgent issues and demands actionable solutions.
2. Exploring Holistic Healing Through Art and Movement
Mental health is often overlooked in maternal care. This year, BMHW will emphasize how music, movement, and nutrition can support Black mothers' well-being. Research shows that dance, creative expression, and traditional foods can play a vital role in stress reduction, emotional healing, and postpartum recovery.
3. Advocating for Policy Change and Birth Justice
BMHW is a time to push for policies that support Black maternal health, such as expanding doula coverage under Medicaid, improving hospital protocols, and funding Black-led birth initiatives. By collaborating with advocacy groups like the NAACP and Birth Justice, we ensure that the voices of Black mothers are heard at every level.
4. Building Community and Support Networks
Healing happens in safe, affirming spaces. The Shades of Motherhood

Network is committed to creating those spaces where Black mothers, doulas, and families can connect, learn, and heal together.

BMHW 2025: Event Lineup

This year's events will highlight the intersection of birth, mental health, and creative expression:

April 11 – Art Gallery Opening | Celebrating the beauty of Black birth through visual storytelling.

April 12 – WSU Conference | A deep dive into maternal health research, solutions, and community discussions.

April 13 – Family Fun Day | A day for families to connect, learn, and celebrate together.

April 14 – Policy & Poetry with NAACP | Advocating for birth justice through spoken word and legislative action.

April 15 – College Tour with Birth Justice | Engaging the next generation in maternal health activism.

April 16 – Dear Sisters Monologue with Black Lens | A powerful night of storytelling and shared experiences.

April 17 – Movement & Zumba with Yoshunda & Judy | Honoring the connection between movement, healing, and birth.

How The Shades of Motherhood Network Supports Black Maternal Health

Our organization is committed to action beyond awareness, offering:



- Doula Mentorship & Training – Empowering Black and Brown birth workers.
- Community Support Groups – Safe spaces for Black mothers, fathers, and families.
- Education & Advocacy – Workshops, panels, and conferences on maternal health.
- Resource Distribution – Mommy Bundles, emergency funds, and community referrals for families in need.

Join the Movement

Black Maternal Health Week is more than an annual event – it's a movement toward liberation, justice, and holistic healing. At The Shades of Motherhood Network, we invite birth workers, policymakers, and community members to stand with us in advocating for equitable, culturally competent care for Black mothers.

Let's reclaim birth as an art, a right, and a journey to liberation.

For more information on BMHW 2025 and how to get involved, visit www.theshadesofmotherhoodnetwork.org or follow us on social media.




SIGN UP NOW

ROOTED IN RESILIENCE

Early Childhood Community Support


The Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) Rooted in Resilience Program** fosters emotional well-being, family connections, and resilience through trauma-informed workshops, storytelling, play-based learning, and caregiver support, addressing systemic barriers.

REGISTER NOW >




TRAMPOLINE PARK ADVENTURE – JUMP FOR JOY!

Location: Get Air Spokane
Address: 4750 N Division St, Spokane, WA 99207
Date: Friday, February 28, 2025
Time: 5:00 PM
Register Here: Jump for Joy Event



BLUE ZOO AQUARIUM VISIT

Address: 4750 N Division St Suite 1242, Spokane, WA 99207
Date: Saturday, March 29, 2025
Time: 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM



FAMILY SKATE AT PATTERSON'S

Location: Patterson's Skating Rink
Address: 11309 N Mayfair Rd, Spokane, WA 99218
Date: Sunday, June 22, 2025
Time: 3:15 PM – 5:15 PM

LAUNCH

Spokane, WA www.theshadesofmotherhoodnetwork.org

Black Student Union Partnership

FRIDAY APRIL 15TH 12pm - 4pm

BLACK COLLEGE TOUR



Register Online **BIT.LY/SOMNBMH25**

2025 The Art of Birth: "The Road to Liberation"

SOMN BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK

In Partnership with Health Equity Circle



IN HER WORDS



By Jordy Jones THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



REPRESENTATION IN MOTHERHOOD HELPS

Stepping into my second pregnancy in June of 2024, mixed emotions of excitement, fatigue and hope in the world spread throughout my life. As a 31-year-old woman, I was mentally prepared to step into my second round of motherhood on my own in terms of seeing mothers that looked like me in my doctor's waiting room and the hospital.

Born and raised in Spokane, I never saw pregnant Black women. I rarely saw Black mothers as it was and can say I never heard Black maternal stories, good or bad. I did not become aware of the struggle in maternal Black healthcare until 2022 when I was pregnant with our first son. I

never knew what motherhood for a Black woman looked like until I stepped into the chapter for myself.

Having my first son in 2023, I entered motherhood with both a worry of raising a Black son, but also navigating Black motherhood.

Finding my footing everyday, I was able to get a peek into what I was missing from witnessing the Shades of Motherhood Network here in Spokane. With only 2.7% of the place I call home being African American, according to the government census, it was no wonder I never saw motherhood in a community that looks like me. However, SOMN allowed me

more insight into what mothers like me can experience in healthcare, knowledge in supporting myself and my family, access to maternal help and more.

With the mission of the network being to, "create a world where Black mothers and families thrive, with equitable access to compassionate care, comprehensive support, and resources that empower healthy pregnancies, births, and postpartum experiences," I have been able to breathe knowing if I needed it, my growing family and I had a strong local community advocate and ally to rely on.

The network not only provides doulas, lactation consultations,

and support groups, but Shades of Motherhood Network (SOMN) also serves Black women and their families through nutrition counseling, infant CPR classes and more. Offering events on a weekly basis, SOMN creates a community that would not be built or maintained otherwise for Black women in Spokane. The network provides access to crucial services that women like me can access and lean on.

Now, as I move into having my second son, I am able to reference and empower other Black women like me who are becoming mothers or mothers already know their worth and know their resources such as SOMN.

IN MEMORIAM

REST IN POWER
in Memoriam



ROBERTA FLACK
(FEB. 24, 2025)

School teacher by day and performer by night, Roberta Flack became an overnight 1970's sensation for her version of "The First Time I Ever Saw Your Face," featured in a Clint Eastwood film. Flack is remembered as a charismatic singer and pianist whose musical gift captured a perfect blend of jazz, soul and folk.



OLGA JAMES
(JAN. 25, 2025)

Most famously known for her role as Cindy Lou in "Carmen Jones," Olga James was an actress and gifted performer in the world of opera. James became popular on the stage in the 1950s leading her Broadway's "Mr. Wonderful" where she stared as Ethel Pearson.



IRV GOTTI
(FEB. 5, 2025)

Co-founder of Murder Inc. Records, Irv Gotti built a career filled with producing artists from DMX and Jay-Z to Ashanti, Mary J. Blige and Ja Rule. Gotti appeared on 28 Hot 100 charts for singles he produced and earned a Grammy in 2003 for his contributions to the debut of Ashanti.



KULTIDA WOODS
(FEB. 4, 2025)

Credited for her inspiration, Kultida Woods was the woman who urged her son, golf legend Tiger Woods, to make red his iconic Sunday playing "power color." Woods taught Tiger the importance of focus and discipline through her endless support and the importance of being impactful.



SAM NUJOMA
(FEB. 8, 2025)

Sam Nujoma built his legacy on fighting for independence in what was once known as South West Africa. Nujoma spent 30 years advocating for his country's freedom from South African rule with the United Nations while remaining in exile. In 1989, Nujoma became Namibia's first president.



HARRY STEWART JR.
(FEB. 2, 2024)

Harry Stewart was one of the few remaining Tuskegee Airmen who battled in several WWII missions and remains one of four airmen to shoot down three enemy planes in a matter of one day. Originally volunteering for the U.S. Army Air Forces at the age of 17, Stewart flew 43 operations in WWII.



TOMMY HUNT
(FEB. 12, 2025)

Joining the Flamingos in 1956 already having solo hits, including "A Kiss from Your Lips," Tommy Hunt was the puzzle piece to put the group on top of the R&B and mainstream charts. Hunt was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and honored with a Rhythm and Blues Foundation lifetime achievement award.



FREDERICK NEWHOUSE
(JAN. 20, 2025)

Frederick Newhouse was an Olympic Track and Field gold and silver medalist, a humanitarian and held an executive position for Exxon and Valero. Newhouse spent his life dedicated to education, his love for track and field, building community and cattle ranching.

IN REMEMBRANCE: THE LEGACY OF DENNIS CRONIN

On January 16, 2025, from the arms of his beloved family, Dennis "DC" Charles Anthony Marcelino Cronin passed peacefully into the arms of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Dennis leaves behind his wife and soulmate, Theresa; son, Marvin Rhone; brother, Dr. David Currier Cronin II and his wife, Catherine; sister, Dana Marie Genarelli and her husband, Dennis; eight nieces and nephews; and chosen family. Dennis was preceded in death by his parents, David Currier Cronin and Antoinette Gugliotti Cronin.

Born September 16, 1960, in Waterbury, CT, and raised in the working-class neighborhood of Naugatuck, CT, Dennis graduated in 1978 from Connecticut's Holy Cross High School, in 1982 from Fairfield University, and in 1985 received his Juris Doctorate from Gonzaga University School of Law.

Dennis chose the law, or the law chose him, as some folks have been heard to say.

He began his legal career in 1984 as a Rule 9 Legal Intern through Gonzaga University Legal Assistance Clinic, a Rule 123 Intern in the Kootenai County Public Defender's Office, Spokane Legal Services Reginald Heber Fellowship, and was hired in 1987 by the late civil rights icon, L. Carl Maxey, from whom he received the moniker "DC". Since 1986, Dennis' commitment to justice resulted in appellate cases, both published and non-published in the Eastern District and Ninth Circuit.

Just two generations after Dennis' Irish-Canadian and Italian great-grandparents immigrated to the United States seeking the American Dream, in 2003 Dennis founded The Law Office of D.C. Cronin, based upon the values of service, rigorous preparation, candor, perseverance, and persistence on behalf of those

who struggle to access justice.

Dennis' passion to be of service was demonstrated by his professional and civic leadership including his service through Spokane County Superior Court as Commissioner Pro Tem from 2005 through 2015, as Chair of the Spokane County Bar Association Family Law Section from 2008 through 2022, Chair of the Washington State Bar Association LGBT Section, Association of Family and Conciliation Courts Washington Chapter, and Northwest Mediation Center Board of Directors. Dennis also served the City of Spokane as Chair of the Human Rights and Ethics Commissions.

Dennis' passion for justice was demonstrated by his comprehensive study of the law and his determination for all people to be afforded access to justice, to be treated with dignity and respect within the courts, and to have the law applied fairly to all, regardless of resources, culture, or language.

To this end, in December 2020, Dennis submitted a proposed General Rule to the Washington State Supreme Court's Rules Committee, in part stating, "The challenges of 2020 have afforded unprecedented opportunities...to equitably access substantive and procedural justice in all Superior Court Domestic Relations systems, the people of Washington State immenently require innovative, timely, cost effective, and efficient transformative options statewide. A general statewide IDRT Rule."

On November 14, 2022, the Washington State Supreme Court adopted Washington State Court General Rule 40: Informal Family Law Trials, effective January 1, 2023. GR 40 IFLT promotes a less adversarial process for families, requires consistency in procedural processes to reduce associated risks of trauma which are com-



pounded by the system itself. The statewide court rule begins to address the impact on families experiencing access barriers, overwhelmingly those most disparately impacted by the justice system as a whole, low-income families, people of color, victims of violence, mental health, substance, and justice-involved persons as they attempt to navigate through an overburdened legal system.

The pinnacle of his career was the establishment of the Sandy Williams Justice Center, a program of the Carl Maxey Center, founded by his dear friend, the late Sandy Williams. It was Dennis' great honor to serve in a volunteer capacity as the Carl Maxey Center General Counsel, as well as the Legal Director and Senior Supervising Attorney for the Sandy Williams Justice Center. Providing free drop-in legal advice clinics, since its inaugural clinic on April 16, 2023, thanks to volunteer attorneys, law students, and legal professionals, as

of January 16, 2025, the Sandy Williams Justice Center had provided legal advice and information to over one thousand individuals.

The Carl Maxey Center and the Sandy Williams Justice Center brought Dennis' commitment to the profession of law full circle as he saw his legal dream come true - ensuring the future continuation of the work of his friend and mentor, the late Carl Maxey.

As he wrote in his 1982 application to Gonzaga University School of Law, "For the past few years, the primary goal in my life has been to become a competent legal aid lawyer...I have increasingly felt a moral commitment to aid the many disadvantaged people living in our society. This commitment is unshakable...Consequently, nothing shall prohibit my eventual fulfillment of this goal..." Over the past 43 years, Dennis stayed true to his moral commitment, "Walk humbly with God, Love Mercy, and Seek Jus-

tice."

As always with his dry humor, Dennis asked Theresa to share, "Don't worry and don't get complacent. I'm still pursuing judicial reform and poverty law, just from a different venue."

Theresa and Marvin extend heartfelt appreciation to DC's Cronin Crew, Becca Gause, Peggy Kilgore, Angel Palmer, Al Judge with special thanks to Gloria Finn Porter, Jill Cornaggia, Walter Kendricks, Jillisa Winkler, Shayla Maxey, Mrs. Wilhelmenia Williams, Rick and Barb Williams and Family, Renika and Andrew Williams,

Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church, the Cedonia Church Family, the Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club, and Randy Brandt.

A Homegoing Celebration of Life will be held Saturday, January 25, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., at Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church, 3909 W. Rowan Ave., Spokane, with Pastor Walter J. Kendricks officiating. Service of Christian Burial will follow at 2:00 p.m., at the Cedonia Community Church and Cemetery, 4562 WA-25, Hunters, WA, with Pastor Ed Dashiell and Pastor Walter J. Kendricks officiating.

To honor Cronin

In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions honoring Dennis be provided to:

Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church: Pastor's Emergency Community Services Fund
3909 W. Rowan Ave.
Spokane, WA 99207

Sandy Williams Justice Center: Community Education and Outreach Fund
c/o Carl Maxey Center
3114 E. 5th Ave.
Spokane, WA 99202

Final arrangements entrusted to Hennessey Funeral Home. This obituary was formerly published in The Spokesman-Review.

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

THE BLACK LENS

In remembrance

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

BLACK BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Allowing Change, LLC. – Pre-Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Certified Life & Relationship Coach Brittney Richards (she/her). (509) 795-0376 or allowingchangelc@gmail.com. 9 S. Washington St., Suite 420, Spokane, 99201.

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

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

Spokane Beard Papa's – Cream puff bakery owned by Marc Bryant. (509) 290-5128 or spokanebeardpapas@gmail.com. 480 8 E. Sprague Ave., Suite 204. Spokane Valley, 99212.

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

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

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

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

Brendan Blocker Realty Services – Real Estate Agent Brendan Blocker. (509) 290-9645 or brendan.blocker@gmail.com. 4407 N. Division St., Suite 200, Spokane, 99207. Online at brendan.spokanearearealestate.com or Facebook: Blocker Real Estate.

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

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

B & B Pro Video – Video Production by DeShawn Bedford and Michael Bethely. (509) 818-0864 or admin@bbpvideo.com. 1011 W. Railroad Alley, Suite 100, Spokane, 99201. www.bbpvideo.com.

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

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

Chop Shop – Barbershop owned by "Big Lee" Lewis. 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday. (843) 751-4873. 1428 S. Lincoln St. thechopshopbarberco.com

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

Compassionate Catering LLC – Catering services. (509) 934-1106 or compassioncatering2023@gmail.com. 1014 N. Pines Road, #120, Spokane Valley, 99216.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fantasy Kleaning LLC – Commercial Janitorial Service by Nathaniel Harris. (509) 890-0819 or fantasykleaning@gmail.com.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lacquered and Luxe – Nail salon owned by Lisa-Mae Brown. (509) 993-7938 or brownlisamae@yahoo.com. 33 E. Lincoln Road, Suite 205, Spokane.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Moore's Boarding Home

– Residential care by Betsy Wilkerson. (509) 747-1745 or betsy@mooresassistedliving.com. 1803 W. Pacific Ave., Spokane, 99201.

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

Natasha L. Hill, P.S. – Lawyer Natasha Hill. (509) 350-2817, (509) 357-1757 or natasha@nlhlawoffices.com. Patsy Clark Mansion, 2208 W. Second Ave., Spokane 99201.

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

New Developed Nations – Level 1 & 2 Substance Use and Mental Health Outpatient Facility owned by Rickey "Deekon" Jones. (509) 964-1747 or info@newdevelopednations.com. 3026 E. Fifth Ave. Spokane, 99202.

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

Operation Healthy Family – Dental and youth programs by Tommy Williams. (509) 720-4645 or tommy@ohfspo-kane.org. Good News Dental is located at 3009 S. Mount Vernon St. at (509) 443-4409. Emmanuel Fitness is located at 631 S. Richard Allen Court at (509) 822-7058.

Parkview Early Learning Center – Early Learning Center owned by Luc Jasmin. (509) 326-5610 or parkviewelc@gmail.com. 5122 N. Division St. Spokane, 99207.

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

Provisional Solutions – Counseling and coaching by Charina Carothers, LICSW. (509) 795-0150 or info@psurnotalone.com. Richard Allen Court, Spokane, 99202.

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

Queen of Sheba – Restaurant owned by Almaz Ainuu. (509) 328-3958 or info@queenofsheeba.com. 2621 W. Mallon Ave., Suite 426, Spokane, 99201.

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

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

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

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

Spacehub Production – Photography Studio owned by event photographer Eugene Muzinga. (509) 216-1072 or spacehub@gmail.com. 1023 W. Sixth Ave., Building 1, Spokane, 99204.

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

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

WrightWay Beauty Supply – (509) 703-7772 (call/text), wrightsbautysupply@outlook.com or visit www.wrightway-beautysupply.com. 2103 N. Division St., Spokane, 99207.

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



COURTESY

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal is located at 645 S. Richard Allen Court in Spokane.

AREA BLACK CHURCHES AND MINISTRIES

Holy Temple Church of God in Christ – Auxiliary Bishop Ezra Kinlow. 806 W. Indiana Ave, Spokane, 99205. Sunday School is 9:45 a.m. Worship Service is 11 a.m.

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal – The Rev. Benjamin D. Watson, Sr. 645 S. Richard Allen Court, Spokane, 99202. Sunday School is 9:30 a.m. Sunday Service is 11 a.m.

Calvary Baptist – The Rev. Dr. C. W. Andrews. 203 E. Third Ave., Spokane, 99202. Sunday School is 9 a.m. Sunday Service is 10 a.m.

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

Morning Star Baptist – The Rev. Walter Kendricks. 3909 W. Rowan Ave., Spokane, 99205. Sunday School is 9:30 a.m. Sunday Service is 10:45 a.m.

New Hope Baptist – The Rev. James Watkins. 9021 E. Boone Ave., Spokane Valley, 99212. Sunday Service

is 10:45 a.m.

Saving Grace Ministries – The Rev. Earon Davis Jr. 3151 E. 27th Ave., Spokane, 99223. Sunday Service is 10 a.m.

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

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

Mount Zion Holiness Church – Pastor: Elder Tommy Whitman. 2627 E. Fifth Ave., Spokane, 99202. Sunday Service is at 10 a.m.

Mt. Olive Baptist Church – The Rev. Patrick Hamm. 2026 E. Fourth Ave., Spokane, 99202. Sunday Service is 11 a.m. Wednesday Bible Study is 6 p.m.

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

NAACP MEETINGS

To join, visit naacpspokane.com/contact.

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

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

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

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

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

EVENTS TO WATCH FOR

MARCH 1: TRAVELS TO KENYA AND TANZANIA – Join the conversation with the WaTravels to Kenya and Tanzania, as part of the Spokane Public Library's Armchair Travelers Series. Go on safaris in Kenya and Tanzania with Cecilia McGowan, all without leaving the comfort of your chairs. If time allows, we will take a side trip to Rwanda 11 a.m.-noon March 1. Shadle Park Library.

MARCH 27: A COMMUNITY PRACTICE: SPRING RENEWAL – This program adapts Cole Arthur Riley's "Black Liturgies: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations for Staying Human" into a type of spiritual "liturgy" that draws quotes and insights from Black intellectuals, ancestors, authors and mentors. Riley describes her hope for

the Black Liturgies event to provide safe harbor for people who have "escaped the trauma of white Christian nationalism, religious homophobia and transphobia, biblical ableism, and ecclesial misogyny." Gonzaga University professor Rossing will be facilitating this gathering. 6-7 p.m. Thursday, March 27. Liberty Park Library, 402 S. Pittsburgh St. Free.

MAY 2: A WOMEN'S WORTH THIRD ANNUAL GALA – Join us in celebrating women who've fought a great fight of hope, dreams, and aspirations as they re-enter their community. 6-8:30 p.m. May 2. 322 N. Spokane Falls Court. Tickets: \$125 per individual or \$1,000 for table of 10. Register for tickets by April 25 at eventbrite.com.

Black Lens pickup and distribution: Get on our list!

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

THE BLACK LENS Contributor Meeting

MARCH

5

2025

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

MARCH 5, 2025 4:30 - 6 P.M.

ZOOM MEETING EMAIL FOR LINK: APRIL@BLACKLENSNEWS.COM

Got Topics? Pitch Your Ideas & Become a Contributor

