

**ELECTION 2024**

*'From Hamer to Harris':  
A NAACP Youth Council  
adviser's experience at  
the 2024 Democratic  
National Convention*  
**PAGE 3**

*Engage in Spokane's  
Future: A call to action  
from the NAACP Civic  
Engagement Committee*  
**PAGE 2**

*The impact of presidential  
debates: A personal  
reflection* **PAGE 2**

An attendee wears a pin reading "Black Women Lead" during the first day of the Democratic National Convention at the United Center on Aug. 19 in Chicago.

GETTY IMAGES

**SPOKANE'S BLACK COMMUNITY NEWS SOURCE**

**BLACKLENS.NEWS**

# THE BLACK LENS

**OCTOBER 2024 - VOL. 9 - ISSUE NO. 9**

## HUMANITY MATTERS

# JUDGE TRACY FLOOD

*First Black woman  
picked for judicial seat  
in Kitsap Co. is change  
she wants to see*

By April Eberhardt  
THE BLACK LENS

The courthouse in downtown Bremerton is the professional home of Judge Tracy Flood, a U.S. Navy veteran who joined the Armed Forces at 17 years old. Arriving in Washington state at the age of 19, Flood attended night classes at Olympic College during her eight-year tenure in the military.

"Once I finished at Olympic College, I transferred to the University of Washington, Seattle," Flood said. "And then I worked a year for the state of Washington as a juvenile rehabilitative counselor."

From there, the judge attended Seattle University School of Law, back when it was the University of Peterson. While her career started out working in juvenile justice, she ended up presiding over all criminal matters in a court of limited jurisdiction.

As the first elected Black woman in Kitsap County to a judicial position, and the first elected woman to the city of Bremerton, Flood aspired to be a judge in the community that she had invested



Municipal Court Judge Tracy Flood was elected as the first Black woman to hold a judicial position in Kitsap County.

# LEGACY OF MAYOR JIM CHASE LIVES ON THROUGH PORTRAIT UNVEILING



DAN PELLE/SPECIAL TO THE BLACK LENS  
Spokane City Council President Betsy Wilkerson is all smiles after a portrait of former Spokane Mayor Jim Chase was unveiled Aug. 28 at the Chase Gallery in Spokane City Hall.

### Black Lens staff reports

Mayor Jim Chase's devotion to art manifests in a portrait unveiling that took place on Aug. 28, in the art gallery named in his honor at City Hall.

The unveiling took place on the 61st anniversary of the March on Washington.

Spokane City Council President Betsy Wilkerson shared at the event, "Why is he iconic? Because no other mayor in the history of Spokane has anything named after them ... We have a gallery, we have a Chase Youth Commission and we have a middle school named after a man



who cared about kids."

During his term, Mayor Chase implemented a 1% rule for the arts, dedicating a portion of large city construction costs to go toward public art.

Watch the event via the accompanying QR code or at [youtu.be/MaNimqAvTY?si=8x5D8d3L3MoGn0a](https://youtu.be/MaNimqAvTY?si=8x5D8d3L3MoGn0a).

## JORDAN CHILES AND THE OLYMPIC BRONZE MEDAL CONTROVERSY

A lot of controversy has recently been brought to light regarding Olympic gymnast Jordan Chiles. Jordan Lucella Elizabeth Chiles recently competed in the Paris Olympics after winning a silver medal in the previous 2020 Summer Olympics.



By Elijah Wright  
THE BLACK LENS  
STUDENT CONTRIBUTOR



to her was incorrect. At the time the judges agreed and adjusted the score accordingly which, under the circumstances, allowed Chiles to surpass the two competitors who had previously scored higher than her, with a new score of 13.766. The Court of Arbitration for Sport later stated that the inquiry from Jordan's coach took place 4 seconds beyond

During the 2024 Olympic Games after Chiles had completed her routine, her coaches appealed to the judges that the level of difficulty awarded

See **CHILES, 10**

**MORE INSIDE**  
**STUDENT VIEW: THE COST OF MISCALCULATION**  
When systems, like the Olympics' Court of Arbitration, fail accountability measures. **PAGE 6**

## Black perspectives provide candor in dialogue about race

By Anyla McDonald  
THE BLACK LENS

In today's society, discussions about race have become increasingly important. With ongoing issues of systemic racism and discrimination, it is crucial for individuals – particularly journalists – to address and raise awareness about these issues. However, it is also important to acknowledge the significance of having Black journalists at the

forefront of these discussions. As individuals who have experienced racism firsthand, Black journalists are uniquely positioned to provide insight, perspective, and understanding on matters of race. Therefore, it is imperative that Black journalists are the ones to lead conversations about race.

One of the most compelling reasons why Black journalists should be the

See **JOURNALISTS, 10**

**MORE INSIDE**  
**CELL PHONES: THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY**

Students react to Spokane Public Schools' recent cell phone ban policy. **PAGE 7**



LEISURE

POETRY CORNER

SELECTIVE OUTRAGE?

By April Eberhardt  
THE BLACK LENS EDITOR



Civil wars instigated by  
National and international  
Forces of exploitation  
In other far nations  
Those of a Darker Hue  
Where is the daily coverage imbued  
On network television nightly news?

Violent enemies empowered by subjugation  
Women and children fall prey  
To domination and desecration  
Living in the shadows of limited outrage  
Who decries their devastation?

Genocide  
Femicide  
Infanticide  
Homicide

Trauma is not an Olympic game  
Nations, for generations  
Have suffered brutality untamed  
But when we protest war, do we call out their names?  
Is the global response the same?  
Do we divest? Do we boycott? Do we march?

With Palestine  
Is Haiti, Rwanda, Congo, Liberia, Sudan  
Let their conflicts be heard  
From the screams of distant lands  
And let their pain, too, be felt  
There is no rank  
When the hand of terror  
Has been dealt



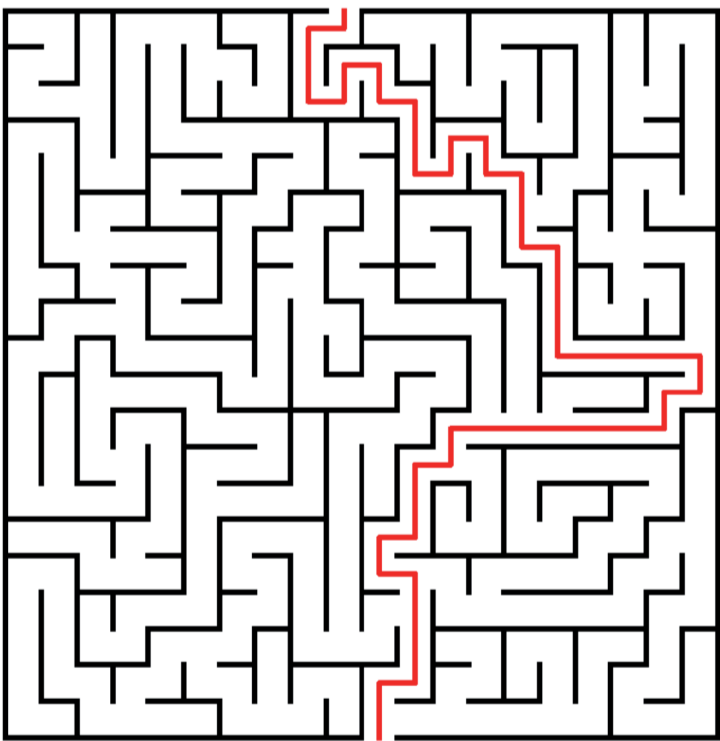
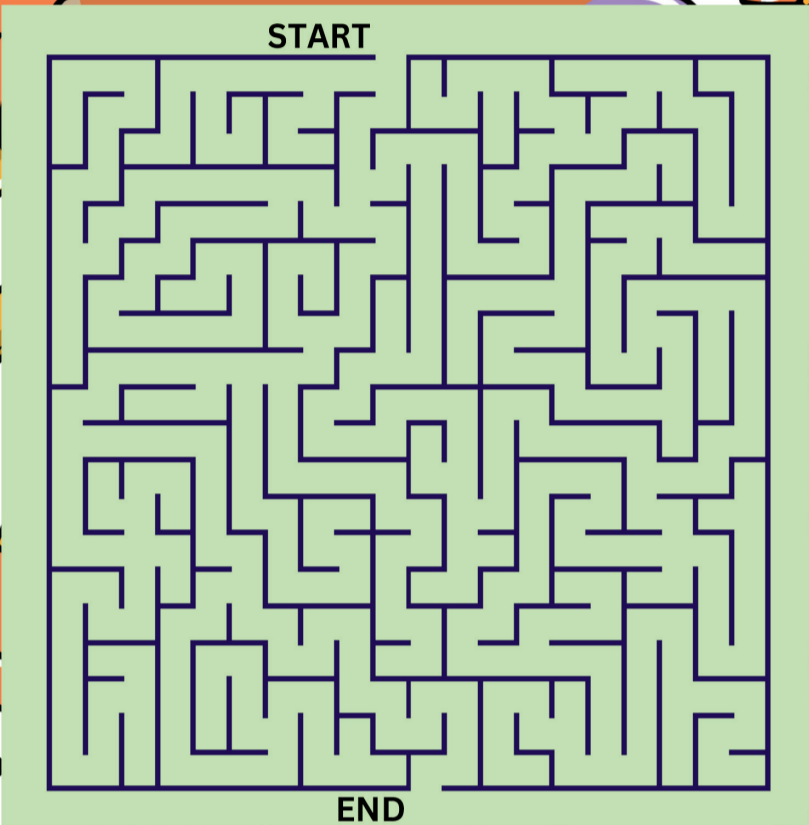
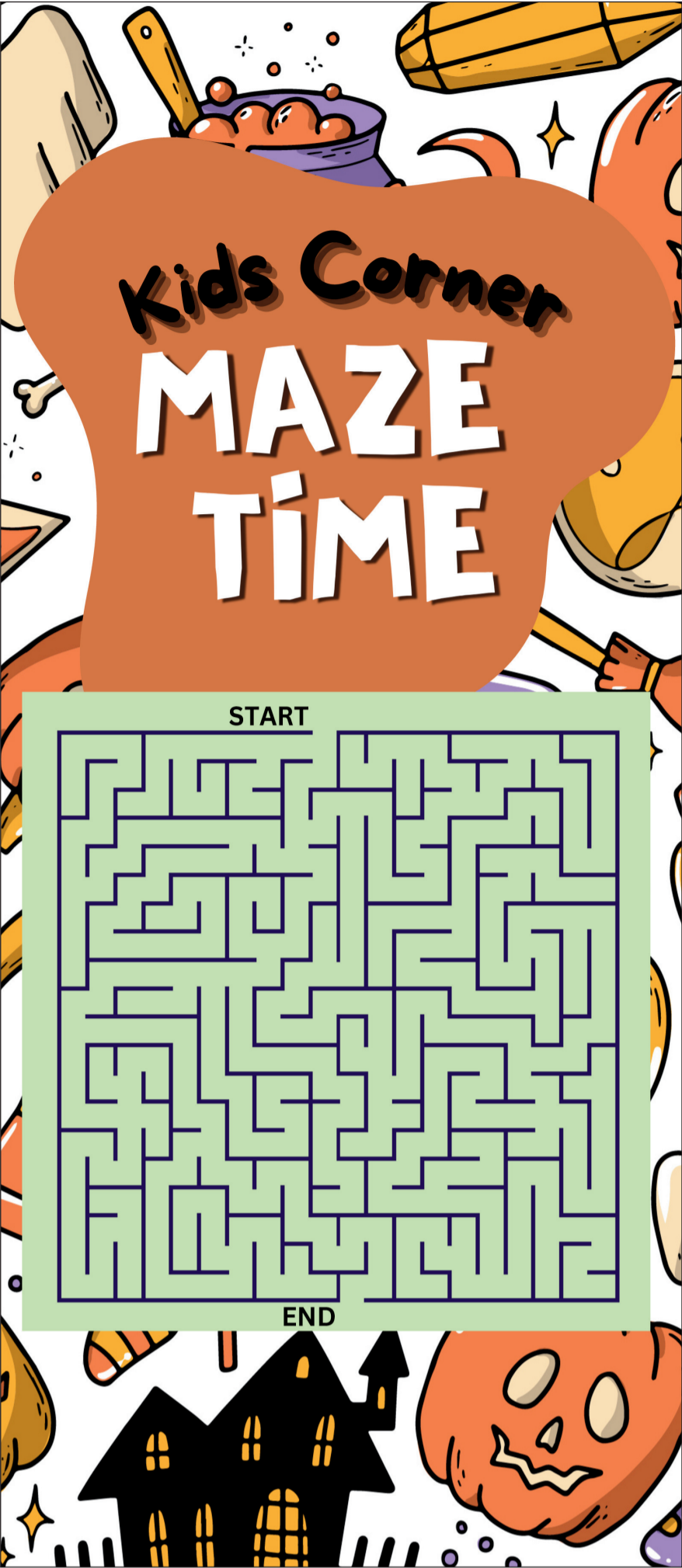
CRYSTAL CONSTRUCTION



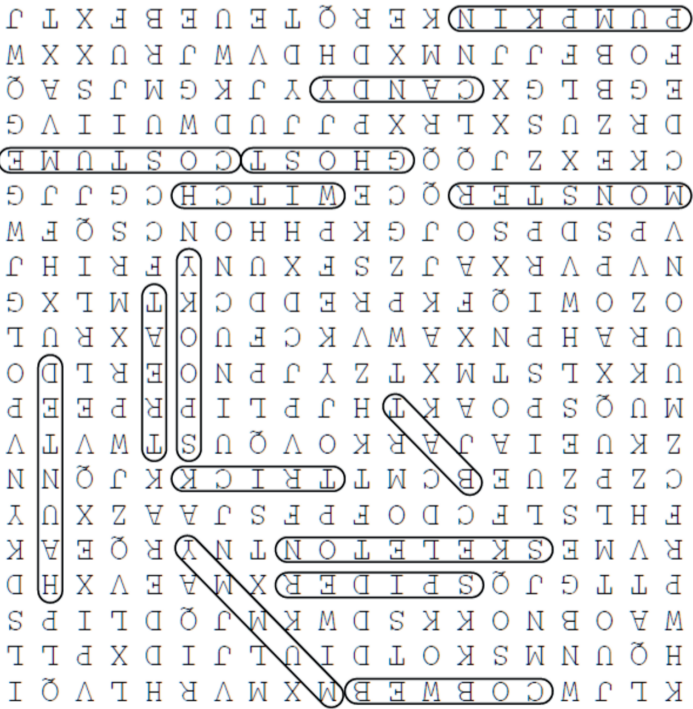
By “AJ” The Wordsmith  
THE BLACK LENS



Open ya meta mind you're a one of a kind meant to shine let me remind! You ain't blind.  
This is your time, not just to grind gears of fears but to grow the soul with seeds of success no mess  
Remembering our roots, our shared truths, we find our mystery the dance of creation  
Writing wordless thoughts  
Be safe when you medicate the mind, meditate the body  
Hate has 4 letters but so does love  
Enemies has 7 letters but so do friends  
Lying has 5 letters but so does truth  
Failure has 7 letters but so does success  
Fulcrum  
Never felt harder then an infinite plot  
To escape this block, like let me stop  
Let me walk, quick to pick up a gun named judgment and shoot ya shot.



MAZE



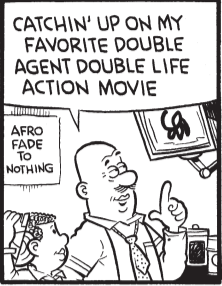
WORD SEARCH

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

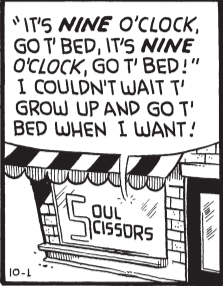
LEISURE  
COMICS

CURTIS • BY RAY BILLINGSLEY

SEPTEMBER 30



OCTOBER 1



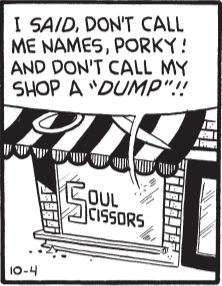
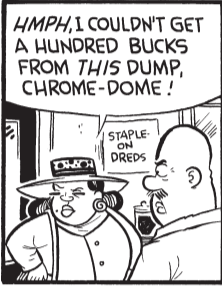
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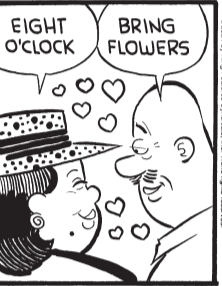
OCTOBER 3



OCTOBER 4

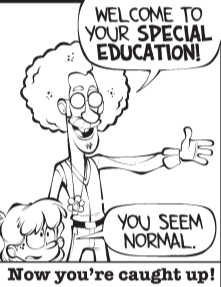
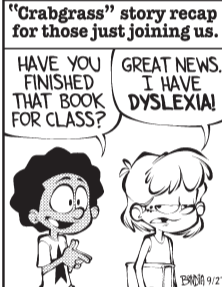


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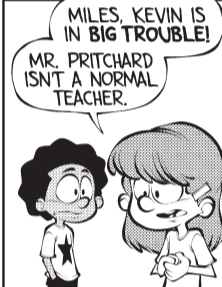


CRABGRASS • BY TAUHID BONDIA

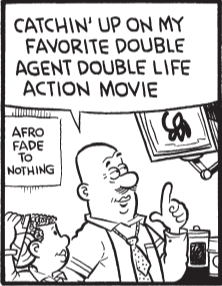
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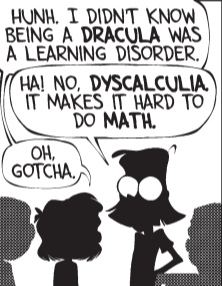
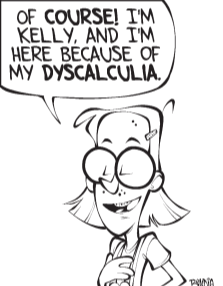
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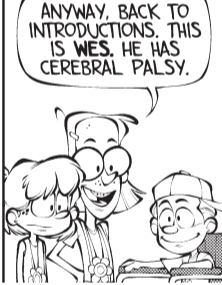
SEPTEMBER 30



OCTOBER 1



OCTOBER 2



OCTOBER 3



HALLOWEEN  
WORD SEARCH

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

Halloween is here! What's your favorite part? Find it hidden in the jumble of letters below!

Pumpkin  
Ghost  
Witch  
Candy  
Bat  
Spooky  
Costume  
Skeleton  
Monster  
Haunted  
Trick

Treat  
Spider  
Cobweb  
Mummy



\*ANSWERS ON PAGE 16

# BLACK BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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

**A Do Good Cleaning Service LLC** – Janitorial service by Daryl Givens Jr. Contact (509) 714-8113 or dgizzle21@gmail.com.

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

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

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

**Allie & Austin Accounting Services** – Bookkeeping by Dorothy Hood. Contact (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). Contact (509) 795-0376 or allowingchangecl@gmail.com. 9 S. Washington St., Suite 420, Spokane, 99201.

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

**Spokane Beard Papa's** – Cream puff bakery owned by Marc Bryant. Contact (509) 290-5128 or spokanebeardpapas@gmail.com. 4808 E. Sprague Ave., Suite 204. Spokane Valley, 99212.

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

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

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

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

**Brendan Blocker Realty Services** – Real Estate Agent Brendan Blocker. Contact (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. Contact (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. Contact (509) 315-8963 or visit bummyboss-clips.appointedd.com.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Ebony Hair Salon** – Salon owned by Pam Thornton. Contact (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. Contact (509) 590-4726 or emendoza@farmersagent.com. 2010 N. Ruby St., Spokane, 99207.

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

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

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

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

**I Hear You Sis LLC** – Nutrition/health coaching by Prosperetti Coleman. Contact (509) 995-7044 or ihearyousis1@gmail.com. Online at www.ihearyousis.com, TikTok: tiktok.com/@i.hearyou.sis.

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

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

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

**Lacquered and Luxe** – Nail salon owned by Lisa-Mae Brown. Contact (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. Contact (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, Non-profit and Sug Villella, Day Care Director. Contact (509) 535-4794 or lwca.gmail@hotmail.com. 2227 E. Hartson Ave., Spokane, 99202. Online at www.southeastdaycare.org.

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

**Lilac City Legends Inc.** – Professional sports team owned by Michael Bethely. Contact (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. Contact (509) 666-4929, (252) 365-4971 or MKwithNicole@gmail.com. Online at mkwithnicole.wordpress.com, Facebook: facebook.com/MKwithNicoleM.

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

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

**Moore's Boarding Home** – Residential care by Betsy Wilkerson. Contact (509) 747-1745 or betsy@mooresassistedliving.com. 1803 W. Pacific Ave., Spokane, 99201.

**MoVin Properties** – Property

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

**Natasha L. Hill, P.S.** – Lawyer Natasha Hill. Contact (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 Tullios-Brady. Contact (509) 475-3556 or tullios\_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. Contact (509) 964-1747 or info@newdevelopednations.com. 3026 E. Fifth Ave. Spokane, 99202.

**Nina Cherie Couture** – Bridal boutique owned by Nina Nichols. Contact (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. Contact (509) 720-4645 or tommy@ohfspokane.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. Contact (509) 326-5610 or parkviewelc@gmail.com. 5122 N. Division St. Spokane, 99207.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Smoov Cutz Barber Shop** – Barber shop owned by Jason "Smoov" Watson. Contact (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. Contact (509) 216-1072 or spacehub@gmail.com. 1023 W. Sixth Ave., Building 1, Spokane, 99204.

**Vision Properties** – Real estate firm owned by Latrice Williams. Contact (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. Contact (509) 822-7514.

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

**3 Performance Institute** – Sports performance and physical therapy by Louis Hurd III. Contact (509) 869-2344 or Louis@spokane3pi.com. 211 W. Second Ave., Spokane, 99205. Online at Spokane3pi.com.

*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

The Rev. Otis Manning and first lady, of the Word of Faith Church, which meets at 10 a.m. for Sunday Service at 9212 E. Montgomery Ave. in Spokane Valley.

## 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** – The Rev. Otis Manning. 9212 E. Montgomery Ave., Spokane Valley, 99206. Sunday Service is 10 a.m.

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

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

**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.

## 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

**OCT. 11: SPOKANE NAKIA ACADEMY REGISTRATION DEADLINE** – Deadline to register for Spokane Nakia Academy, a new program bringing together educators of color over a five-month period for a total of 23 hours of thinking, learning, interacting, skill-building and fun. Register online at: www.summituniversity.org/nakia-academy. Classes to be held 9 a.m.-noon Saturdays at the Spokane Education Association Office, 230 E. Montgomery Ave. Lunch is provided. All participants who successfully complete the academy receive 23 clock hours and a \$500 stipend for their experience. Nakia is open to both certificated (Spokane Public Schools PERT eligible) and classified employees. Classes are Oct. 19, Nov. 2, Nov. 16, Dec. 7, Jan. 4, Jan. 18, Feb. 1, Feb. 15.

**OCT. 15: NAACP CIVIC**

**ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE'S CANDIDATE FORUM** – The NAACP Spokane Branch invites you to take an active role in shaping the community's future through informed voting and civic participation. The upcoming Candidate Forum, co-hosted with Thin Air Community Radio at the Spokane Public Library, is an opportunity to meet local candidates and hear about their vision for our area. 6-8 p.m. Oct. 15. Central Library, 906 W. Main Ave. Free. More information online at events.spokanepubliclibrary.org/event/9140005.

**NOV. 9: FREEDOM FUND GALA** – The NAACP Spokane branch's annual fundraiser, which directly supports a scholarship fund for local high school students entering higher education. 5-9 p.m.. Nov. 9. DoubleTree Hotel. \$100-\$150. \$1,000 per table. Online: naacpspokane.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

OCTOBER

8

2024

JOIN EDITOR APRIL EBERHARDT AT THE THE SCHOENBERG CENTER TO GET ASSIGNED STORIES FOR UPCOMING ISSUES OF THE BLACK LENS.

OCT. 8, 2024  
4:30 - 6 P.M.

SCHOENBERG CENTER  
800 N. PEARL ST.  
SPOKANE, WA

Got Topics? Pitch Your Ideas & Become a Contributor



IN MEMORIAM

REST IN POWER  
*in Memoriam*



**FATMAN SCOOP**  
(AUGUST 31, 2024)

A celebrated New York DJ and rapper, known for his powerful voice and hit singles like "Be Faithful." He was a fixture in the hip-hop community, performing at major events and collaborating with top artists.



**RICH HOMIE QUAN**  
(SEPTEMBER 5, 2024)

Dequantes Lamar was an Atlanta rapper famous for his melodic style and chart-topping tracks like "Type of Way." He played a significant role in shaping the sound of Southern rap during the early 2010s.



**JAMES EARL JONES**  
(SEPTEMBER 9, 2024)

An iconic actor with a distinguished career spanning theater, television, and film, most famously voicing Darth Vader in Star Wars. His deep, resonant voice and powerful performances made him one of the most respected figures in the entertainment industry.



**MICHAELA DEPRINCE**  
(SEPTEMBER 10, 2024)

A Sierra Leonean-American ballerina who overcame incredible adversity to become a celebrated dancer. She rose to fame with her performances in The Nutcracker and Swan Lake, and her memoir, Taking Flight, has inspired many around the world.



**FRANKIE BEVERLY**  
(SEPTEMBER 10, 2024)

A revered musician and lead singer of the band Maze, known for hits like "Before I Let Go" and "Joy and Pain." His soulful voice and smooth grooves made Maze one of the defining acts in the R&B and soul genres from the 1970s onwards.



**TITO JACKSON**  
(SEPTEMBER 16, 2024)

An original member of the Jackson 5, helped shape pop music in the 1970s alongside his famous brothers. As a guitarist and vocalist, Tito contributed to the group's global success and had a lasting influence on R&B and pop music.



**REBECCA CHEPTEGEI**  
(SEPTEMBER 27, 2024)

a talented Ugandan Olympian and long-distance runner, passed away at the age of 33 after a tragic incident involving her ex-boyfriend. Throughout her career, she achieved significant milestones, including competing in the Olympics and representing Uganda in various international competitions.

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](mailto: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.

HEALTH AND SPIRITUALITY

IN A WORLD THAT DEMANDS WE GO FAST, MAY WE GO SLOW



By Jasmine Kazuko  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



After a prescription to do yoga before a knee surgery my freshman year of high school, I unknowingly continued down a path that has expanded into my soul's calling. I now hold two certificates in Reiki, over 10 years of experience as a certified yoga and meditation guide, a certification as a Somatic Energy Practitioner, and I'm a trained Psilocybin guide and wellness coach. Through the collection of my learnings and experience, I offer you this:

In a world where rest and slowness are not only rare opportunities but a danger for some, take refuge here. Offer permission to yourself to feel sheltered by the words on this page. Sink into safety from the outside world's judgment and urgency that has been forced upon you and absorbed within you. As you read and digest, you're invited to pause, to feel, and to reflect on what you're experiencing in your body. Allow yourself to rest heavy against the seat, knowing that your time is well spent here, reading – slowly.

Take a deep breath in through your nose. Exhale it out through your mouth.

I invite you to sit with two truths. The first, that a regular mindfulness practice can enhance the overall health of an individual. The second, that the BIPOC community experiences the highest levels of stress-related health disparities in the United States. It's unlikely that either of these statements are new to you or shocking. However, what is shockingly “new” is a widely accepted understanding that a regular practice of meditation, breathwork, journaling, yoga, and other somatic and mindful practices can greatly enhance one's overall health; and that BIPOC are less likely to access mental health resources and practices due to societal pressure and a lack of acceptance rooted in historical trauma.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

As a mixed race cis-woman who grew up and gave in to the societal brainwashing of going fast, achieving high, and being utterly heartbroken but stoic in the face of personal and systemic racism, I finally hit a turning point. When chronic depression due to a hormone disorder and physical alignments continued to be ignored or brushed off at the hand of medical professionals, I realized I had to heal myself. Through an imperfect practice of yin yoga, meditation, journaling, ancestral and energy work, and therapy, space within me opened. I came to see that despite what history has tried to condition me into believing, I too am worthy of unconditional love and healing. Access to holistic and high quality mental, physical, and spiritual health is my right.

I landed on the deep knowing that living my life in direct opposition to the societal forces placed upon me and those who share a melanated experience with me is where my power resides. So, let us do it – in groups, in private, but in community nonetheless, let us heal. If we stand powerful in the pain we carry, just imagine the power we hold in liberation. It is my greatest rebellion in this fabricated culture to rest, to express, to be liberated in my vulnerability. It is a gift to the next generation that we meditate, journal, cry, talk about our failures, our dreams, our confusion, our anger, our joy, our pride, to be fully imperfect in our perfect wholeness.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

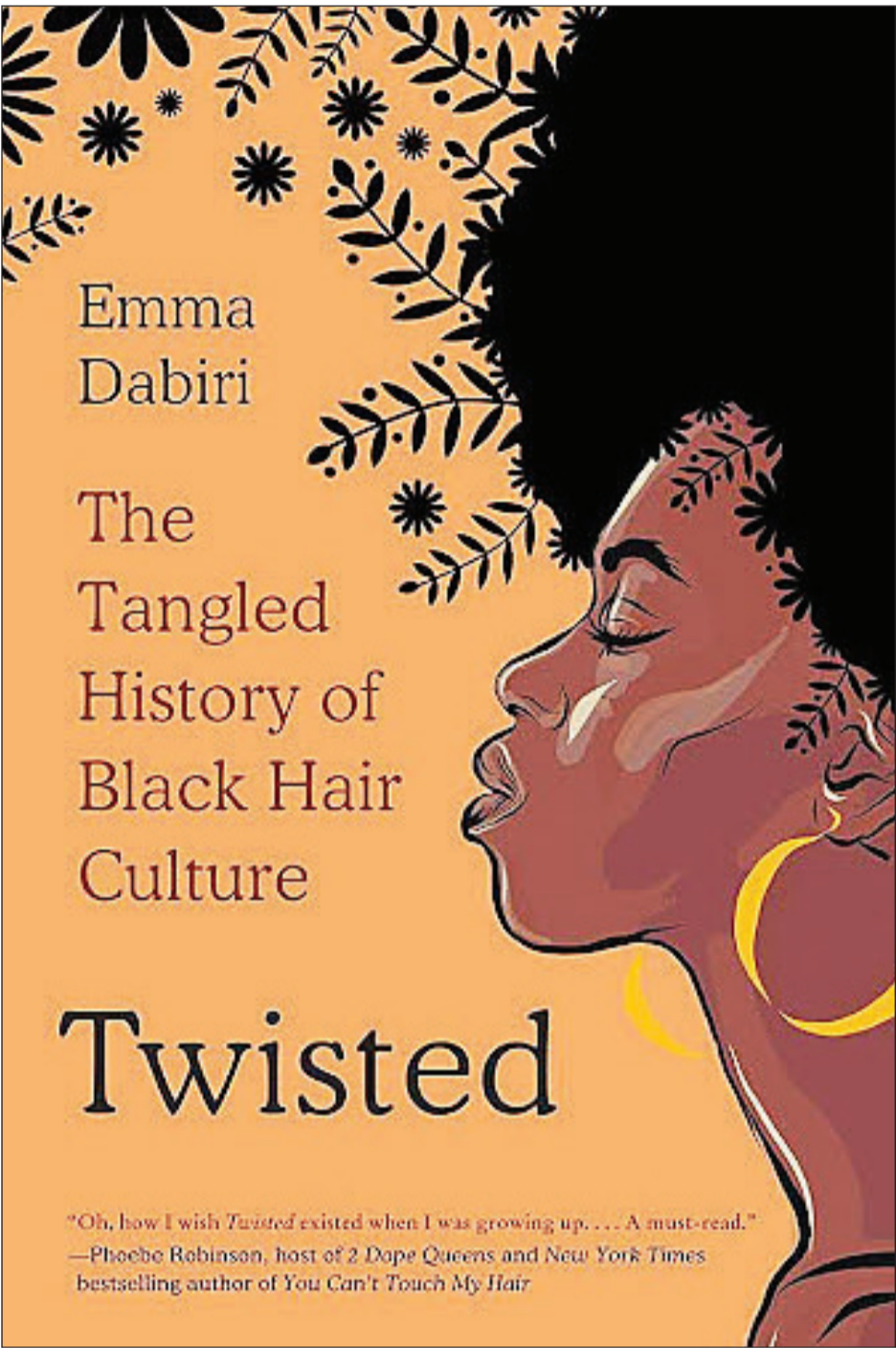
It is our right to go slow and be soft. May we continue to flourish in a society that tries to capture us in its harshness. And may we rebel with the power of breath, with presence, and with rest.

One Minute Wellness Invitation:

- Breathwork:
- Place both hands over the heart, close the eyes or lower the gaze and take three to five full breath cycles (in through the nose, out through the mouth).
- Reflection/ Journal/ Draw:
- What sensations, emotions, reactions, memories, colors, etc., came to you?

Go slow and with love,  
jasmine kazuko  
hello@kazukowellness.com

TWISTED: THE TANGLED HISTORY OF BLACK HAIR CULTURE  
BY EMMA DABIRI



By Emmarae McLendon  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



Emma Dabiri's book *Twisted* effectively weaves together her personal journey with learning to love her hair and historical reference from precolonial Africa, through the Harlem Renaissance, and into today's Natural Hair Movement. She explores so much throughout this book it's incredible given that it is 244 pages.

Dabiri takes us on such an emotional (and relatable in some aspects) hair care journey. I find it interesting that she has an Irish mother and a father from Yoruba (I'm also biracial Irish and West African descent and 'Emma' is part of my name, are we supposed to be best friends??). A lot of her childhood experience and relationship to Black hair culture comes from her time growing up in Ireland. Although I did not grow up in Ireland, so many of the things she experienced hit close to home. Especially in the few quotes where she was quoting things kids would say to her in school, it felt like flashbacks since we have part of the same name, "I don't even see you at Black, Emma" ...yikes that

When it comes to Black hair care I think a lot of us can say we are exceptionally familiar with all the struggles, wins, and triumphs.

one that hit home!

I strongly appreciated the research that clearly went into this book. I want to give you a play by play of each chapter but then this would take up the whole paper! The work and love that clearly went into this book is felt through the page. I loved being taught so many new historical aspects of Black hair care and culture. It made me feel much more connected to myself and my hair. I felt empowered and further curious! Dabiri has a great talent for displaying her research in an easy to understand way. I felt as though I was being spoken to, this did not at all feel like a clunky info dump history book. I loved how she took us through time: how things were before colonization, during (I mean when they were actively in Africa stealing our Ancestors), and present day.

I love when a book can make me feel empowered to be the Black woman that I am! This book did make me much more mindful of my self care practices including how I love and treat my hair. A loc journey is a mental journey of its own, but no matter where you are in your hair journey I believe you will feel strengthened after reading this fantastic book!

My Empowered Reading Guild will be reading this while I teach various classes that help introduce various self-care practices! Check out [www.EmmaraeEmpowered.com](http://www.EmmaraeEmpowered.com) for more info!

upcoming  
events

yin yoga +  
breathwork

spokane, wa  
weds. oct. 2  
6-8 pm

virtual  
sun. oct. 20  
2-3 pm pdt

yin yoga  
for the  
mixed soul

meditation +  
breathwork

hybrid weekly:  
mon. 7am +  
thurs. 9am

denver, co  
dec 6-9  
registration open

day six  
leadership  
retreat

To learn more about Kazuko Wellness, or to register for the above events, visit [www.kazukowellness.com](http://www.kazukowellness.com).

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THE BLACK LENS

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

# The costs of miscalculations: Missouri executes man for 1998 killing despite inconsistent DNA evidence

Black Lens staff reports

Marcellus Williams, a Missouri man convicted of breaking into a woman’s home and repeatedly stabbing her, was executed Sept. 24 over the objections of the victim’s family and the prosecutor, who wanted the death sentence commuted to life in prison.

Williams, 55, was convicted in the 1998 killing of Lisha Gayle, who was stabbed during the burglary of her suburban St. Louis home, the Associated Press reported on Sept. 25.

Williams was put to death despite questions his attorneys raised over jury selection at his trial and the handling of evidence in the case, the AP wrote. His clemency petition focused heavily on how Gayle’s relatives wanted Williams’ sentence commuted to life without the possibility of parole.

“The family defines closure as Marcellus being allowed to live,” the petition stated. “Marcellus’ execution is not necessary.”

Williams final written words were, “All Praise Be To Allah In Every Situation!!!”

The NAACP had been among those urging Parson to cancel the execution, the AP reported.

“Tonight, Missouri lynched another innocent Black man,” NAACP President Derrick Johnson said in a statement.

It was the third time Williams faced execution, the AP stated. He got reprieves in 2015 and 2017, but his last-ditch efforts this time were futile. Parson and the state Supreme Court rejected his appeals in quick succession Monday, the AP wrote, and the U.S. Supreme Court declined to intervene hours before he was put to death.



Marcellus Williams, 55, was executed Tuesday, Sept. 24, despite multiple questions over the handling of evidence in his case and repeated calls for clemency over the past decade.

COURTESY OF MARCELLUS WILLIAMS’ LEGAL TEAM AND THE INNOCENCE PROJECT

## FLOOD

Continued from 1

in, that she raised her daughter and younger sister in. When she was elected to her position as judge in November 2021, Flood had been practicing law for 21 years. Her professional journey followed stints in maximum and medium security facilities such as Green Hill School and Mission Creek. She has supported clients with mental health hearings and as a public defender, she did all the felony arraignments.

“The average person doesn’t understand what judges really do,” Flood said. “The amount of work. I am a single court bench. So not only do I do calendars Monday through Friday, I also respond to all the warrant calls, 2 o’clock, 3 o’clock in the morning. And then addressing arrests that have happened over the weekend with reviewing police reports on Sundays.

“A lot of our smaller courts, the courts of limited jurisdictions, do have one judge.”

Flood, in her tenure, has also established a community court.

What drew Flood to the field of criminal justice? Growing up in the city of Chicago gave her a direct line of sight of what we now call the school to prison pipeline. At the age of 12, Flood recalls having a summer job as a tutor through a summer program.

“I’m in seventh, eighth grade, tutoring kids in high school who couldn’t read but were athletes, and in some way had been passed and pushed through the system,” Flood said. “So, from that day forward, my heart has always been around making sure to interrupt that school to prison pipeline whenever I could.”

Flood remembers the community she grew up in, reaching back to mem-

ories from 5 years old. Her elementary school was across the street from the apartment buildings and her parents could look out the window and see her walk to the playground. Across from there was the ABC Youth Center. And on the other corner to the east was the middle school in the Douglas Park area of Chicago. She felt like it was the greatest neighborhood because, in the early 1970s, everyone knew each other. Through those years something shifted, Flood said.

“I don’t know, but something changed,” Flood said. “And then the building went from being a street building to live in to a slum building.”

Multiple factors added to the decline of her neighborhood. “But now that I know history, it was very political.”

The gradual erasure of community programs, depleting resources and an uptick in crime are among the factors that started a trend of urban decay, weakening the infrastructure of what was, to Flood, one of the greatest neighborhoods. That ABC Youth Center had men of color who were there counseling. Youth had a place to go right there in the neighborhood where they lived. There were activities.

“I really think that we have moved away from that ‘I am my brother’s keeper mentality’ to ‘what’s in it for me,’” Flood said.

Her experiences growing up in Chicago steered her toward a career in criminal justice. When asked what she would do today to change the trajectory of eroding the inner cities, Flood would change the lens of our messaging when talking to and about youth from positive to negative. Keeping programs funded is a priority to support youth and understanding the underlying and overarching effects of poverty

in families.

“Make the investment into the children where they live,” she said.

Those communities with the highest needs should not be underfunded and unprotected.

“My work in the juvenile arena continued officially through paid work while I was in law school. But after law school, I kind of switched over to the adult side,” Flood said.

Now Flood’s passion for mentoring juveniles and teenagers is voluntary. Her contributions to youth programming include the following activities and initiatives: the ACT-SO program for the Bremerton branch of the NAACP; a community art wall to feature paintings from young people; the AVID program at an area middle school; the Access to Justice Conference; Pierce County Minority Bar Association’s Youth in Law; the University District YouthCare program in Seattle; and last year Flood facilitated a countywide youth in law forum.

Flood hopes her volunteerism and love for mentoring youth can introduce them to the criminal justice system from a positive standpoint so that their first introduction isn’t with an officer in a negative light.

“We want to kind of stop that revolving door, stop that school to prison pipeline; interrupt what’s happening and address the issues that are really plaguing the individuals,” Flood said.

She sees the need for a different perspective in the legal profession, in which many judges are appointed. When Flood tried for an appointment, she said she learned a lot of things in the process. She noted that across the U.S., judicial races have become more political and divisive.

“What has happened to the notion of justice for all? Lady Justice is bro-

ken. Why do you think that is? Because of systemic racism in the justice system. Our Washington Supreme Court has acknowledged that,” Flood said. “But when you have a history of a country of racism that is built on the enslavement of a people that built the country’s wealth, how do you continue that?”

Flood correlates capitalism to how our systems function.

Understanding poverty and privilege in America is critical for those in positions of power to understand. There is also, Flood asserted, a sense of entitlement rightness in her profession that taints the process; everything from who’s expected to be a prosecutor to who’s supposed to be a defense attorney and how race plays into that narrative.

“So, the process within itself is plagued with challenges and issues of racial bias,” Flood said.

When reflecting on enacting change, Flood knows that change is needed, but change is hard. It takes sacrifice.

To new lawyers she presses, “Will you accept the challenge? Of being a changemaker, if that also puts a target on your back? Count the cost. Because often we sit on the sidelines because it does come at a heavy cost. But we can talk about change. And until we have a seat at the table, we can’t expect change to happen.”

She said other pertinent issues impacting the effectiveness of the justice system are the salaries between the public defender and the prosecutor; funding of the courts, and recognition of how all three branches will address the crisis that exists in our criminal justice system. We are in crisis, Flood said.

“We’re reacting. We need to become proactive,” Flood said. “In order to do that, we have to recognize that.”



GETTY IMAGES

Jordan Chiles of Team USA looks on with her Bronze Medal from the Women’s Apparatus floor final on Day 10 of the Olympic Games Paris 2024 at Bercy Arena on Aug. 5 in Paris. The Bronze Medal was later rescinded.

## CHILES

Continued from 1

the 1-minute deadline. However, following this statement, the U.S. released a video in which it can be seen that the appeal took place in 47 seconds after the score was posted. Despite the release of this video, having already stripped Chiles of her medal, the CAS released a statement saying that nothing could be done, and they were unable to reconsider the decision.

This statement was followed by outrage from not only the U.S. but by many others who had all supported Chiles in the past. After learning that she would not receive her medal back, Chiles released a heartfelt message. Chiles would first thank her coaches, family, fans, and the entire U.S. Olympic Organization for supporting and helping her through this tough time. She would then go on to address the reclaiming of her medal by the CAS, where she stated: “I have no words. This feels unjust and comes as a significant blow not just to me but to everyone who has championed my journey. To add to the heartbreak the unprompted racially driven attacks on social media are wrong and extremely hurtful.”

This statement brought to light and emphasized the racial attacks that

had been taking place. However, considering all this, the Olympian who received the bronze that was taken from Chiles, Ana Barbosu also began experiencing hate from supporters of Chiles, some people even claim (although not backed by any evidence whatsoever) that Chiles had something to do with the hate directed at Barbosu.

Following the ceremony where she received the medal that had been taken from Chiles, Ana stated that she couldn’t help but think of Chiles and how she hoped no one had done anything wrong at the Olympics.

The CAS still has not released any more significant statements on the situation. This is a very mixed situation as some hold the belief that the Olympic rules have been the same and shouldn’t be changed for a single athlete; they believe it has always and will always remain the same regardless of the circumstances. Others have stated that in this instance, the rules were not followed, and they were changed in support of Ana Barbosu. Barbosu and Chiles did not have a say in how this turned out; the CAS has made a series of decisions and actions which have not found that the coaches were right in the timing of their appeal. The decision has been made not to reinstate Chiles’ initial score.

## JOURNALISTS

Continued from 1

ones to talk about race is their personal experiences with racism. Black journalists have likely faced discrimination and prejudice in various aspects of their lives, giving them a deep understanding of the complexities and challenges of racism. They can draw from their own experiences to speak authentically and honestly about the impact of racism on individuals and communities, shedding light on issues that may not be readily apparent to those who have not experienced racism firsthand.

Furthermore, Black journalists are more likely to have a nuanced understanding of the historical, social, and cultural context of racism. They are often more attuned to the subtleties and nuances of racial discrimination, as well as the historical implications of racism in shaping societal structures and systems. This knowledge and insight can enrich discussions about race, providing a deeper understanding of the complexities and intersections of race and other social issues.

In addition, having Black journalists lead conversations about race can help amplify the voices and experiences of marginalized communities. By centering the per-

spectives and narratives of those most affected by racism, Black journalists can bring attention to the lived experiences and struggles of individuals who have been marginalized and oppressed. This can help raise awareness, foster empathy, and promote greater understanding of the diverse and often overlooked experiences of individuals from different racial backgrounds.

Moreover, Black journalists can challenge stereotypes, biases, and misconceptions about race by providing accurate and nuanced representation of diverse racial experiences. By offering counter-narratives to mainstream depictions of race, Black journalists can help dismantle harmful stereotypes and distortions, promoting more accurate and empathetic understandings of race and racial identities. This can contribute to greater social awareness and cultural sensitivity, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

Furthermore, Black journalists can bring a critical and insightful perspective to discussions about race, highlighting the systemic and institutional dimensions of racism. They can draw connections between individual experiences of racism and broader patterns of inequality, discrimination, and injustice in society. By examining the ways in which racism operates

at different levels and affects various aspects of people’s lives, Black journalists can provide a more comprehensive analysis of the complex and intersecting dynamics of race and power.

Additionally, having Black journalists speak about race can help bridge divides and promote dialogue and understanding across racial lines. By sharing their stories and perspectives, Black journalists can foster empathy, connection, and mutual respect among individuals from different racial backgrounds. They can serve as mediators and facilitators of meaningful conversations about race, promoting dialogue, education, and reconciliation in a society that is often deeply divided by racial tensions and inequalities.

Overall, the importance of having Black journalists lead conversations about race cannot be understated. Their unique perspectives, experiences, and insights can enrich discussions about race, challenge harmful stereotypes, raise awareness about systemic inequalities, and promote empathy and understanding across racial lines. By amplifying the voices and stories of Black journalists, we can create a more equitable, inclusive, and just society, one that values diversity, equality, and social justice for all individuals, regardless of their racial background.

## More information

In People magazine, Jordan Chiles stated at the Forbes Power Women’s Summit on Wednesday, Sept. 11: “The biggest thing that was taken from me was that it was the recognition of who I was. Not just my sport, but the person I am,” Chiles said when asked about being stripped of her medal.

She continued, “To me, everything that has gone on is not about the medal. It’s about my skin color.”

Learn more about the Jordan Chiles controversy by going here: [today.com/news/paris-olympics/jordan-chiles-bronze-medal-controversy-rcna166095](https://today.com/news/paris-olympics/jordan-chiles-bronze-medal-controversy-rcna166095)



COMMENTARY

PAUL OLDEN COMES BACK TO SPOKANE



KATHY PLONKA/SPECIAL TO THE BLACK LENS

Paul Olden speaks at Northwest Passages while interim Black Lens editor April Eberhardt and Spokesman-Review editor Rob Curley look on.



By Jaeylin Severino  
THE BLACK LENS  
CONTRIBUTOR



excited to learn what he was all about. As someone who is not too heavily invested in baseball myself, I did not know how to engage or where to hold expectations. However, Olden’s “magical” voice, love for storytelling and passion for the game of baseball kept the room alive that evening. As a people, African Americans have mastered the art of spoken word, and he is no exception. He reflected during Northwest Passages on the power of oral language, once one of the only means of

literacy that Black people had at their disposal. “Some of the great orators, of course, come from the Black churches ... whether it’s the Black church, or Blues music, the fields and the songs that the slaves had to sing, that was another way of communicating of course.” He talked about how the Black community has always found a way to communicate with each other in a manner that is understood within the context of familiarity. He gave a nod to hop hop, which has become replicated and made into a larger than life industry, yet was initially a vehicle of expression for us, by us. Coming from Los Angeles, Olden explains the trials he went through to get to the Big Apple, and how the Spokane Indians got him started on his journey forward. His story is a simple one: he was a young boy, hailing from a family where his father made a living as a preacher. Growing up, he knew exactly what he wanted to do for a career. He stood out from peers and other people in his field because he always seemed to be willing to do the work nobody wanted to do. He became masterful and keen when it came to finding, and then seizing, opportunities. Olden believes that it’s not always what you know, but who you know, and is invested in keeping his connections abundant. He regularly keeps up with old

friends from every city he’s worked in or traveled to, and that’s how he found his way back to Spokane. One of his first big gigs was actually the Spokane Indians, and he reached out after finding them on Instagram as they showcased many stories from their 125 year history. Olden truly is an extraordinary man full of warmth, stories and laughter. When I asked him about any sort of self-doubt he may have experienced, or any sort of setbacks that made him question his decisions, he paused for a second, and said something I wasn’t expecting: he’d never had any. For me, this was almost preposterous; surely this Black man from L.A., who reflected on seeing the National Guard during the Watts Riots of 1965, driving down his street, from a window in his home, may have experienced that doomed feeling in the pit of his stomach that he may never make it. To the contrary, Olden said that was never an issue for him. His journey was not without incidents; he just stayed focused on what gave him the most satisfaction, and that was his love for baseball and his broadcast career. That inspired me because it really shows that if you put your mind to something, and if you’re passionate enough about what you do, obstacles do not have to stop you from getting there. Olden’s longevity and climb through

the years is a dance with many moments with legends in both broadcast journalism and the sports world. There were times when he would reconnect with people from many years prior, but he always kept going. He knew he was capable; he knew he was worth it, just like any of us. Check out his instagram where he takes time out of his busy life to still take pictures of families and animals, Olden believes that pictures are important for the representation of community, authentically and genuinely, and having them for memories is a point of focus for him. Regardless of if you’re a baseball fan or not, I highly recommend learning more about Paul Olden and his journeys.

See the full Northwest Passages interview by going here:



THE GREAT

OUTDOORS COMEDY

FESTIVAL 2024

By Lyv Babinski  
THE BLACK LENS  
CONTRIBUTOR



What is the Great Outdoors Comedy Festival?

The Great Outdoors Comedy Festival (GOCF) is a large multi-venue event that hosts the biggest names in comedy each summer. GOCF attracts tens of thousands of attendees in various places in the world such as Canada, Europe, and the United States. They bring the most famous comedians to their platforms such as Matt Rife, Nate Bargatze, Kevin Hart, Tom Segura, and Shane Gillis. 2024 was the first year that GOCF came to the United States. They picked Spokane, WA due to the proximity to Canada (their homebase) and the availability of the newly built Spokane One Stadium in downtown Spokane. Since this comedy event is hosted outdoors they found the One Stadium to be the perfect fit. The community of Spokane was thrilled to welcome Tom Segura, Shane Gillis, and Kevin Hart to the area. Outdoor events are a challenge in places like Spokane, where the weather is often unpredictable. One night one of the three evening event, there was a huge storm that let up right as the doors opened. Thousands of people were still able to enjoy the kick off evening of the festival. Many people were bundled up in blankets and jackets but were not going to let the weather get in their way of enjoying an evening of fun and laughter.

What was it like to attend the comedy festival?

Attending The Great Outdoors Comedy Festival was an exciting experience for all involved. Upon entry there was carnival-like entertainment with stilt and acrobatic performers. Food and beverages were available for purchase as people found their seats. Live music was playing before the event started by Spokane musician Nathan Chartrey. Each evening included 3-4 comedians to showcase their talent leading up to the headlining comedian. As each headliner took the stage, they were met with a standing ovation from adoring fans. Each headliner made the crowd roar with laughter as they shared stories, jokes, and their observations of Spokane. It was an unforgettable and exciting weekend.

Festival supports local performers

The Great Outdoors Comedy Festival values supporting local performers. In addition to the big names coming to the



stage they wanted to include names of people that the community recognized. People who could make the crowd laugh and represent the comedy scene in the area. The Great Outdoors Comedy Festival partnered with Spokane Comedy Club in order to select the local festival hosts. Charles Hall Jr., Lyv Babinski, and Casey McClain were selected to host each night of the festival. This opportunity was an incredible honor for each local comedian. It meant the world to each of them to be able to showcase their talent to a crowd of over five thousand people.

Spokane is on the map

Spokane is continuing to grow as a community that is able to host incredible evenings of entertainment. Furthermore, the community is able to provide the necessary accommodations for thousands of people to visit and enjoy what the city has to offer. The reputation of Spokane will only become stronger as a place where big name performers and entertainment platforms will want to come. Hopefully we will see The Great Outdoors Comedy Festival come back next year and bring more quality entertainment experiences to our community.

A CONVENTION BY

BLACK PEOPLE, FOR

BLACK PEOPLE

By Brianna Fields  
THE BLACK LENS  
CONTRIBUTOR



“We dreamed of bringing together like-minded individuals to enjoy and celebrate multiple interests including pop culture, comics, art, cosplay, music, and much more.”  
-DreamCon Team



DreamCon is an anime, gaming, and comic convention started by Black people, for Black people. It was started by YouTubers RDCWorld (Real Dreamers Change the World) in 2018. This year’s DreamCon was from July 26-28 in Austin, Texas, with a record-breaking attendance of 22,000+ people from around the United States. It was my first year attending DreamCon and I can truthfully say I’ve never been to a convention, whether it was for fun, work, or school, that was so well organized and put together from start to finish. One ticket sale each season from Autumn to Spring, discounted hotel rates, and enough workshops so you’ll always have anything to do. For example, if there was a workshop you wanted to attend and it ended up being full, there were numerous other workshops you could attend that would catch your interest. If not a workshop, you could spend your time in the exhibition hall where you could shop from many small businesses. The array of small businesses made keychains, figures, posters, comic books, etc. All made with the creators’ specific art style. DreamCon “provides endless entertainment for you all weekend long with a traditional artist alley, engaging panels, and memorable meet and greets.” As the aforementioned quote stated, there was something for everyone! Some of DreamCon’s staple events include Dodgeball, Cosplay contest and runway, All-Star Super Smash Bros Tournament, Crew Battle, and Family Feud. Since DreamCon was started by YouTubers, it’s only natural to have some well-known YouTubers attend. YouTubers who attended were Berleezy, AMP, KEVON-STAGE, Khleo Thomas, and so many more. The multitude of events that took

place included Arcade Free Play, Husbando Wars (that was 18+), Marvel Cosplay meetup, KPOP Trivia and Variety Show Games, HBCU Meetup, Road to Voice Acting, Anime and Mental Health: Main Character Energy Saved My Life, Otaku Cabaret (that was also 18+), Bleach Cosplay Meetup, Why Black People Love Dragon Ball Z, and How Woman Changed Shonen Forever. This small list doesn’t even touch the amount of activities this convention had! DreamCon sounds amazing, right? Everything a Black nerd dreams of, but how did it come to be? The founders of RDCWorld – Mark Phillips and Affion Harris – didn’t have the best experience trying to be guests at other anime conventions, so they decided to start their own. “Originally, we were planning on visiting anime/comic conventions as guests to meet and interact with our fans in a fun setting. However, many of these conventions (except for a small few) were either ignoring us or turning us away and saying we wouldn’t ‘fit in.’” Myself and thousands of other Black nerds across the country are extremely grateful they took matters into their own hands. DreamCon 2025 will be held in Houston, Texas from May 30-June 1, with Autumn ticket sales starting at the end of August. If you want to learn more, visit their website at [www.dreamconvention.com](http://www.dreamconvention.com).

CONTRIBUTOR SPOTLIGHT

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HARRIS-WALZ  
CAMPAIGN LOOKS  
TO MOBILIZE  
BLACK VOTERS

The Harris-Walz campaign and the Democratic National Committee launched a massive voter registration campaign across 60 HBCU campuses aimed at increasing engagement before the election, particularly in key battleground states like Georgia and Pennsylvania.



CALLS TO HALT  
EXECUTION FAIL

Missouri executed Marcellus Williams, despite significant evidence suggesting he was wrongfully convicted. Civil rights advocates, including Congresswoman Cori Bush, called attention to racial bias in his trial, where Williams was convicted by a predominantly white jury. Read more on the mishandling of justice on Page 10.

Photo: provided by Marcellus Williams' legal team to the Innocence Project

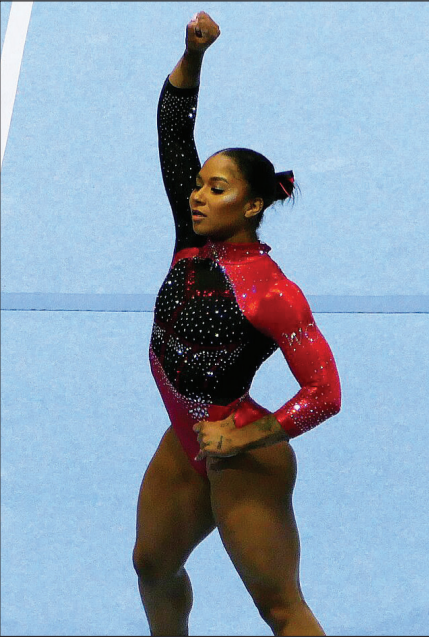
SEAN "DIDDY"  
COMBS ARRESTED  
ON RACKETEERING,  
CONSPIRACY  
CHARGES

The charges have put Diddy under intense legal scrutiny and his arrest marks a significant development in the case, with allegations dating back several years. This case, along with multiple incidents involving violence against women has serious implications for his legacy in the music and entertainment industry.



HAITIAN GROUP IN  
SPRINGFIELD, OHIO,  
FILE CRIMINAL CHARGES  
AGAINST TRUMP

Guerline Jozef, leader of the Haitian Bridge Alliance, filed criminal charges against Donald Trump and Senator JD Vance, accusing them of spreading false claims that led to threats and bomb scares against Haitian immigrants. The charges include disrupting public services and making false alarms.



JORDAN CHILES  
FILES SECOND  
APPEAL IN FIGHT  
TO RECLAIM  
MEDAL

USA Gymnastics and Jordan Chiles have filed separate appeals to the Swiss Federal Tribunal, seeking to overturn a ruling that stripped Chiles of her bronze medal from the floor exercise final at the 2024 Paris Olympics. They argue that new video evidence shows her scoring inquiry was filed on time, contrary to the initial CAS decision.

MEET ANYLA MCDONALD:  
CONTRIBUTOR FOR  
THE BLACK LENS



Anyla McDonald is an 18-year-old self-published author of the book "Black Joy & Black Tribulations." She is an intern at Tailored Living Magazine, a columnist at Tumbleweird, and the newsletters editor for the Washington Chamber of Commerce. Her writing has also appeared in other local publications, including the Tri-Cities Journal of Business and the Waitsburg Times. Anyla frequently visits Black Student Unions, colleges, and libraries to share her personal experiences with racial discrimination, Black Thanksgiv-

ing traditions, Black history, and Black music. She works with numerous organizations, such as the Tri-Cities Diversity & Inclusion Council, Running Waters, Urban Poets Society, Sounds of the People, Cocoa, and The Listeners Project, to amplify stories of Black excellence. Anyla's writings focus on themes of Black joy, Black trauma, and Black achievement, with the goal of empowering and encouraging others to embrace and celebrate their Blackness. Her powerful words are sure to touch, move, and uplift readers.

BREAKING BREAD  
TOGETHER:  
INITIATIVE  
TO FIGHT RACISM  
AND BIGOTRY



By Robert Lloyd  
THE BLACK LENS  
CONTRIBUTOR



not only benefit your establishment but also contribute positively to our community's social fabric. As you are already aware, issues surrounding racism, bigotry, and the marginalization of certain groups persist in our society. In an effort to combat these issues and foster meaningful dialogue, I am proposing the implementation of a unique initiative called "Breaking Bread Together."

The concept behind Breaking Bread Together is simple yet powerful. It involves hosting gatherings at your restaurant or coffee house where individuals from all walks of life can come together over a specially curated bread for 5-10 people. These gatherings would take place once or twice a month and serve as a platform for open and respectful discussions on social change, inclusivity, and empathy.

I believe that by participating in the "Breaking Bread Together initiative" your establishment can reap numerous benefits, both tangible and intangible. Here are some incentives for restaurants to consider:

1. Community Engagement: By hosting these gatherings, your restaurant can position itself as a community hub that actively promotes social dialogue and positive change.

Open Letter to Restaurant and Coffee House Owners: I am writing to you with an exciting proposal that I believe will

2. Increased Foot Traffic: The unique nature of the Breaking Bread Together events is likely to attract new customers who are interested in participating in meaningful discussions while enjoying a special meal.

3. Positive Brand Image: Being associated with a socially conscious initiative like "Breaking Bread Together" can enhance your restaurant's reputation and differentiate it from competitors.

4. Cultural Impact: Your restaurant can play a pivotal role in nurturing a culture of understanding, compassion, and unity within the community.

5. Revenue Generation: The specially curated bread for group settings can serve as an additional revenue stream for your business, attracting larger parties and boosting sales.

In addition to these incentives, participating in "Breaking Bread Together" can also have a profound impact on the social fabric of our community. By providing a space for people to come together, share their perspectives, and foster empathy, your restaurant can be a catalyst for positive change in our society.

I urge you to consider joining us in this important initiative. Together, we can create a more inclusive and compassionate community where everyone feels welcome and valued. If you are interested in learning more about "Breaking Bread Together" or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to the possibility of working together to make a difference.

Robert Lloyd  
info@4comculture.com

STUDENT VIEW

CELL PHONES AT SCHOOL: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY



By Sian Armstrong  
THE BLACK LENS YOUTH CONTRIBUTOR



Technology has progressed profoundly in the last few years, like Alexa and the concept of self-driving cars. There is one thing that is everywhere now: cell phones. From the workplace to your house, someone can be seen with one. Our schools are another example. Around 97% of high school students own one! However, these devices have been a major topic of discussion for school officials. On August 28th, the Spokane Public Schools Board of Directors enforced a stricter cell phone policy. This policy allowed cell phones only at certain times, like lunch or on your way to class. However, usage during class is no longer allowed. And not too many students or teachers like the change.

However, many adults agree with the Board of Directors, saying that they are a distraction to the learning environment at schools. Two scientists at Carnegie Mellon University's Human-Computer Interaction lab asked 136 college students to take a brain function test. They were

Sophomore,  
Ferris High School

interrupted on their phones by a notification, which they were told had more info on the test. The control group scored 20% higher than the other. Still, the results were not that accurate. Even now, you cannot find anyone in college who cannot be distracted by their phone. Nonetheless, phones in schools are not always a terrible thing.

Fifth grade Humanitarians teacher Stevie Frank agrees that cell phones can be a great learning tool, saying, "You've got to teach the kids how to manage their technology and if we're not going to do it in school, where's it going to be done?" ("Cellphones in Schools: A Huge Nuisance and a Powerful Teaching Tool") Schools are places to learn about the world and what is around you. Yet, they still acknowledge that phones can be a little distracting, and they have found ways around that. "Giving students the choice to disengage from their phones helps "get their buy-in," Frank said. "They are like, 'yup, I need to do that.'" ("Cellphones in Schools: A Huge Nuisance and a Powerful Teaching Tool") Giving the students a chance to return to learning makes cell phones in class such a helpful tool.

As a student, I believe smartphones can be a helpful and time-saving tool. We used to use our phones in the classroom to fill out surveys. It was also a nice backup plan in case somebody left their computer home. Cell phones can have both positive and negative impacts in the classroom, depending on how they are used. So, should students be allowed to use phones in class, or should their use be restricted?

STUDENT VIEW:  
CELL PHONES



By Stori Taylor  
THE BLACK LENS YOUTH CONTRIBUTOR



School officials think that cellphones cause anxiety, depression and distractions to learning. I see their point, but I would like to offer the opinion that there are other stressors in the lives of students in school and out of school. The decision for this 2024- 2025 school year that students shouldn't have their phones in class or in the hallways during class time came as a surprise to students and was a disappointment to many.

Many disagree with this matter, including myself. In cases where there are safety issues in the building, having a phone can help students feel connected

to their families in the event of an emergency. But needing to see better safety and more protection is one of our biggest concerns and there should be attention by teachers and administrators on that as much as keeping phones away.

Students with extenuating circumstances in their families may want to keep their phones on them to keep contact with their loved ones. Also, being able to focus for some students is a factor to consider, since phones can provide music for those who need to concentrate on assignments when possible. Listening to music can help students who worry or need to calm down.

I get that phones can be a distraction for some students, I've seen it, and I understand both sides between students and teachers/administrators. However, when thinking about the school environment, locked doors, cameras, and walkie talkies aren't doing anything if we keep having dangerous situations occur. When phones are not accessible to students due to being taken and locked up, this creates a feeling of helplessness. Phones are a safety net for many and are helpful when there are chaotic situations that come up.

CELLPHONES AND  
SOCIAL MEDIA:  
FRIEND OR FOE?

The Black Lens  
staff report



Two pieces to consider as it relates to how social media affects Black youth expound upon insights related to psychological safety and positive body and identity development.

One article posits that social media provides a platform that allows space to speak about racism and discrimination in community with others who understand in a manner that is not always possible within the social systems Black people occupy daily.

An opposing argument to the role of social media in the lives of Black youth posits that the algorithms and pressure of identifying with identity and beauty standards are dangerous and can lead to toxic behaviors associated with body image.

As social media has made a permanent place in the daily lives of many, is it a tool? Is it to our detriment? Or is it a resource that can activate our lived experience in a new way?

COULD SOCIAL MEDIA POSITIVELY  
AFFECT BLACK YOUTH?



INSTAGRAM VS. REALITY: A  
CRITICAL LOOK AT BLACK TEENS'  
MENTAL HEALTH



"Black Twitter" has become a colloquialism that signifies Black empowerment, voice, and visibility. Check out the documentary "Black Twitter: A People's History" on Hulu.

BLACK TWITTER: A PEOPLE'S  
HISTORY

Now Streaming



SCHOLARSHIP  
OPPORTUNITY

OMEGA PSI PHI  
FRATERNITY, INC

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. is pleased to announce its annual International High School Essay Contest. As an element of the Annual International Achievement Week Observance, we invite high school seniors to participate in our annual High School Essay Scholarship contest.

Four College Scholarship Awards:  
1st Place: \$5,000; 2nd Place: \$3,000; 3rd Place: \$2,000; 4th Place: \$1,000

Essay due to local chapter: Oct. 31

2024 Essay Topic: "What impact do you believe that Social Media is having On Mental Health and Why is it Important to Address this issue?"

Eligibility & Rules: The Contest is open to all college-bound, high school seniors who submit an essay application through a Chapter of the Fraternity. The essay must be original and neither previously published nor secured by copyright. The essay must be between 700 and 750 words in length. The type-written, double-spaced essay may be submitted via postal service or email in Microsoft Word. Use of assistance software and/or technology (i.e. AI) in creating this original work is strictly prohibited. The Committee will be using software to detect the usage of Artificial Intelligence to assist with the essay. If the content is found to be above a 40% threshold the essay will be disqualified.

To receive an application, contact Taurus Richardson via email at: taurus.richardson10@gmail.com



STUDENT VIEW

HOMESWEET HOME: THE BLACK STUDENT UNION



By Amari Troutt  
THE BLACK LENS  
CONTRIBUTOR



For many Black students stepping onto Gonzaga's campus, the experience can be both exciting and daunting. It's not just about encountering new faces but often the realization that few will reflect their own. Navigating this predominantly white space, many students ask themselves, "Where are all the Black students?" or "Where can I find a home away from home?" The Black Student Union (BSU) at Gonzaga is more than just a club; it's a refuge, a place where Black students can truly feel at home. We're a diverse group of 25-40 students from various backgrounds, and that diversity is our strength—it's the beautiful tapestry that makes us whole.

Our mission extends beyond social connec-

tions. The BSU is dedicated to uplifting and empowering our members, creating spaces for cultural expression, and advocating for meaningful change. We organize cultural events, and panel discussions, and are working to create networking opportunities with alumni and professionals. By collaborating with other student organizations, we push for a more inclusive and understanding campus. Through our events and community service initiatives, we ensure that Black students feel seen, heard, and supported.

BSUs are vital at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) because they provide essential solidarity and cultural affirmation. Black students often face challenges such as racial microaggressions, lack of representation in leadership, and a lack of Black perspectives in the curriculum. BSUs address these challenges by giving students a collective voice and a safe space to be themselves. Solidarity within historically marginalized groups is crucial. It fosters a sense of belonging, strengthens resilience, and helps students navigate their experiences. By coming together, we build support networks that empower us to overcome obstacles and strive for success. Through unity, we celebrate our achievements, confront systemic issues, and advocate for equity and justice.

Despite the strong sense of community within the BSU, Black students at PWIs still face unique struggles. Many experience isolation, underrepresentation, and cultural displacement. The lack of diversity can create the "spotlight effect" where Black students feel hyper-visible in predominantly white spaces yet invisible in terms of support. The pressure to succeed while representing an entire community can be overwhelming, leading to burnout. Yet, in the face of these challenges, the resilience of Black students is remarkable. The BSU offers a lifeline—a space where students can recharge, connect with peers who share their experiences, and find the strength to thrive academically and personally. We work not only to support our members but to challenge the broader campus community to be more inclusive, ensuring that Gonzaga is a place where all students can succeed.

Additionally, our BSU is committed to deepening our engagement with the Spokane community. We aim to connect with local organizations and foster partnerships that benefit both Gonzaga students and the broader Spokane area. By collaborating with community leaders and participating in local events, we strive to create positive change and strengthen our ties with the city. We are also proud to honor the memory of San-

dy Williams, a beloved Spokane activist and community leader, through the Sandy Williams Scholarship. Each year, two students are awarded \$500 in recognition of their contributions to the Black student community and their commitment to social justice. This scholarship serves as a financial resource and a tribute to Sandy's enduring legacy of advocacy.

Our 2024-25 BSU officers are:

- President: Amari Troutt (Spokane, WA)
- Vice President: Kendall Scipio-Shepard (Seattle, WA)
- Secretary: Grant Barnes (Aurora, CO)
- Activities Coordinator: Kendall Featherstone (Austin, TX)
- Treasurer: Alastor Collins (Renton, WA)
- Dinner Chair: Yene Bereket (Mountain Lake Terrace, WA)
- Public Relations: Myles Sandy (Washington D.C.) and Kahlomo Cunningham (Aberdeen, WA)
- UACC Rep: TJ Aguma (St. Louis, MI)

Together, we strive to create a supportive and empowering community where Black students at Gonzaga can thrive, knowing they are not alone. We are their home away from home.

THE COST OF MISCALCULATION



By Nikita Habimana  
THE BLACK LENS  
YOUTH CONTRIBUTOR



of life, when the processes are broken, we must take a closer look and recognize how to fix the problem. A system failure robbed Jordan Chiles of her bronze medal in the 2024 Paris Olympics Games.

Chiles, a beloved member of the U.S. Olympic team whose contributions have led the American gymnastics team to victories, faced a heart-breaking controversy in August. She went into the Olympics and gave it her all, expecting to be judged fairly in return. Instead, she faced injustice and (later on) discrimination, racism, and harassment online. The debacle began when Chiles was announced as the bronze medalist for gymnastics at the Olympics, however, the International Olympic Committee later on demanded that she give up the medal to Romanian competitor Ana Barbosu, claiming that there had been an error with Chiles's score. Chiles had initially been underscored, then later her scores were corrected, and they went up, leading her to a bronze medal victory. Her medal was then taken away a few days later because the International Olympic Committee stated that her coaches failed to report the miscalculation on time.

Despite the claims, there is not one, but two pieces of evidence that the coaches

Shadle Park High School, 11th Grade

Throughout history, systems have failed us. They are the very things made to uphold our society and ensure that we do not ensue in chaos. When the sting of injustice hits, no matter how big or small, we hope that our systems will make it right. Whether we are at home, at our workplaces, at school, in any walk

submitted the report in less than one minute, much earlier than Romanian coaches claimed. Although the U.S. decided to appeal to the International Olympic Committee, the powers that be have decided not to entertain the appeal, leaving a wronged Chiles without a victory that is not indicative of her ability and hard work, but of a technicality that has been proven in her favor. But they will not budge.

What this circumstance teaches us is that there must be fail-safes set in place for situations such as these, to protect against clearly proven errors in unfair situations. A fail-safe plan comes into operation in the event of something going wrong or to prevent such an occurrence from happening. Systems should be challenged when processes are broken. No longer can we allow excuses or brick walls to further inequalities. We need to advocate for change, build solidarity, and speak up for one another for our voices to be heard. The failure of the system in Chiles' situation is an example of what it looks like when we are failed by those who hold power, even though everything was done right by her coaches. She certainly isn't the first, nor will she be the last.

The metaphor of losing the bronze due to a miscalculation in score and time can be used as a guide for what can go wrong when the rules don't follow the truth. In this case it is a bronze medal. How can we learn from this when the stakes are much higher? As in the case of Breona Taylor? Or Emmitt Till? Or Trayvon Martin? Evaluating the fairness of systems helps thwart corruption, in any case. There is much to be lost when injustice is a wrench thrown into the proper operation of institutions. Power cannot be a shield.

The lesson in all of this? We as a society, as a people, should come together to challenge power when there is a power failure. In the great words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects us all indirectly."

BELONGING



By Daniela Musesambili  
THE BLACK LENS YOUTH CONTRIBUTOR  
SHADLE PARK HIGH SCHOOL



In my current experience of moving from a fully Black community in another country, to living in a mostly white community, I feel the stares of everyone looking at me like an outsider as I sit in class, not looking or sounding like others. I find myself thinking about instances of racism and discrimination because of my appearance, whether my different hair or skin color, or the assumption that I cannot do certain things because of who I am, or how I am perceived. Being different from others, awakens all different types of fear in me.

The fear to be heard.  
The fear of not fitting in  
The fear of not being loved as I am  
These all leave me with so many "what ifs".  
What if I don't fit in?  
What if I am not accepted?  
What if! What if! what if!

I guess the whole experience isn't what I thought it would be.

A World of So Many Voices

So many broken families  
So many broken hearts  
So many broken friendships  
So many broken relationships  
So many broken marriages

A world of so many voices  
Crying for help  
Crying out of fear Crying out of pain  
Crying out of anger  
Crying out of shame

It sucks because not all voices are heard  
Not every cry is heard  
'Cause most voices are hidden in dark corners  
Hoping to be heard or found

A world of so many voices

CELEBRATE YOUR SENIOR YEAR WITH A

# Free Portrait Session!

## @MANITO PARK

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2024

1:00PM - 5:00PM



BLACK CLASS

The Psi Nu Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the Nu Epsilon Lambda chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. are proud to gift senior portraits to the incredible students of color in Spokane!

We believe every student deserves to celebrate their achievements in style. That's why we're offering senior portraits at NO COST to high school students of color who qualify for free and reduced lunch. This is our way of honoring your hard work in achieving this milestone on your journey.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Eligible students will receive gift certificates for a free senior portrait session with a professional photographer. To confirm your participation, click or copy and paste the following link into the search bar on or before Thursday, October 10, 2024 at 6:00pm: <https://forms.gle/UsXW8Yh8FPhtQYQA6>

For more information, visit [www.psinuomegaaka.com](http://www.psinuomegaaka.com)

NAACP  
Spokane Branch

## FREEDOM FUND GALA

SATURDAY, NOV 9, 2024



The Freedom Fund Banquet is our local branch's annual fundraiser, which directly supports a scholarship fund for local high school students entering higher education.

Supporting the annual dinner enables our Spokane NAACP to further the mission and work of the Association and continue the fight against the assault on civil and human rights.

The annual dinner also allows the Spokane NAACP to recognize the achievements of outstanding individuals and entities who have contributed significantly to the fight for civil and human rights and have laid the foundation for ensuring justice and equity for future generations.

### Event Details

**Location:**  
DoubleTree Hotel  
322 N Spokane Falls Blvd

**Order of Events:**  
5:00pm - 6:00pm • VIP Reception (VIP Guests)  
6:00pm - 7:00pm • Cocktail Hour  
7:00pm - 9:00pm • Main Event

**Tickets:**  
Ticket Pre-Sale Begins Sept 1st:

Members \$85	After Oct. 1st Prices Increase To:
Non-Members \$110	Members \$100
Table Price \$1,000	Non-Members \$150
	Table Price \$1500

Tickets & More Info at  
[NAACPSpokane.com](http://NAACPSpokane.com)



STUDENT VIEW

# A CENTRAL VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL GRAD MAY BE THE ‘NEXT PERSON’ FROM HOWARD U

*Birdie Bachman has left the Inland Northwest to gear up for a career as a human rights lawyer at the nation’s premier HBCU. Her time working with the Diversity Club at the high school, where staff lags in diversity, was a crash course in activism.*

By Aaron Hedge  
RANGE MEDIA

*This story originally published in RANGE.  
Learn more at [www.rangemedia.co/blacklens](http://www.rangemedia.co/blacklens).*

When Birdie Bachman was in her mother’s womb nearly two decades ago, her grandmother, D.G. Garcia said a prayer, almost an incantation. She asked that God give her grandchild certain qualities.

“I said, ‘Dear Lord, I’d like her to have this and this, and could you sprinkle some of this? How about a little bit of that?’” Garcia told RANGE in an interview early this year. “When that child was born, she was the most magnificent human being I’ve ever seen.”

(Of Birdie’s brother, Baer, Garcia said, “He’s handsome, too.”)

One quality Garcia requested began manifesting in Birdie at an early age: an uncanny ability to “size people up” and, if needed, take action.

Since then, Birdie has built herself into an advocate of underrepresented communities in Central Valley schools, which have offered her not only a primary education but also a crash course in activism. She wants to carry that experience into a career as a human rights lawyer. In June, she graduated from Central Valley High School (CVHS) and on Monday will start classes at Howard University.

But it was a long road to get here – one she started on as a toddler.

In one of the earliest instances of Birdie taking action, Garcia painted a picture of baby Birdie having a playdate with a young boy at her parents’ home. The boy was hogging her toys, and even “nudged her” to get one of the toys for himself.

Birdie looked around the room and noticed the adults in the room weren’t doing anything about the boy taking control of her toys, Garcia remembered. She knew that sharing was a value everyone should practice, and took control of the situation.

“She walked up to him,” Garcia said. “He faced her. She asked for something, and he didn’t give it. ... And the next thing I witnessed ... she gave him the who’s-in-charge bump. They do it in football. They walk to each other and then they bump the chest, and then they go on about their business.”

Garcia had never before seen anyone – of any age – assert their power like that.

“She wanted to say, ‘Not gonna happen,’” Garcia said. “‘Not here, not with my toys. Because what we’re supposed to be doing is sharing.’ ... And it never happened again, and they became good friends.”

There was sizing up, and then there was action. It’s a powerful – perhaps necessary – capacity for someone who was born to a white father and Black mother in Liberty Lake, a largely white city in Eastern Washington. The city is 90% white, compared to 78.5% in Washington state as a whole, according to Census data.

Perhaps Birdie’s sense of needing to assert herself stems from a strong family culture of participation in the public square. Originally from California, Garcia is a former Liberty Lake City Council member and a regular attendee at public meetings. With Birdie’s help, her mother Maria Garcia-Bachman organized women’s marches in Spokane for years. The three women attended a City Council meeting in December 2023 to oppose a controversial resolution allowing the body to control the city library after it had allowed a challenged queer book to remain on the shelves.

This kind of work is important in a community that didn’t orient itself around the experiences of Black people and other minorities.

## Fledgling activism

Birdie’s early high school experience was in the thick of the COVID-19 pandemic, at Ridgeline High School. During that time, she noticed signs of a community that didn’t value diversity when her high school canceled an assembly planned by the Diversity Club and instead had the students record a short video.

“There’s a known dislike for diverse clubs or clubs that don’t always [represent] the majority in this area,” Birdie said. “In Spokane Valley, not everyone likes us.”

Birdie later transferred to CVHS to finish high school. There, she dedicated herself to political education projects, starting a Students United for Reproductive Freedom Club and circulating a petition to address what she called “racial bias” at CVSD.

As a member of the Diversity Club, Birdie helped organize assemblies, including this year’s Martin Luther King Day event, which the school had scheduled for Friday, January 12. While planning the assembly, though, she didn’t know it would become another test of her ability to stand up for herself and her community.

On the prior Tuesday – as Birdie and her colleagues were finalizing the event’s details – she learned through the club’s adviser that CVHS was canceling the event, despite months of planning by the club and, Birdie said, approval from school administrators.

Marla Nunberg, a spokesperson for the Central Valley School District (CVSD), told RANGE the students were unprepared to execute the event. In place of an assembly, the administration wanted teachers to present a slideshow or a lesson on Martin Luther King, Jr., to their individual classrooms.

Birdie marched to the school office to confront the administrators who’d made the decision and convince them the club was, in fact, ready to host the student body to an MLK Day presentation. Over the next couple of days, Birdie and the Diversity Club students convinced the school to let the assembly go ahead. It was a normal high school event, if you don’t count the extra effort it took to get it over the finish line.

## Fighting for the assembly

As she waited in the school office to talk to an administrator, Birdie texted Garcia-Bachman.

“I can’t talk much,” she wrote. “Waiting for a meeting. The assembly has been canceled. We’re trying to fix it. I’ll be respectful.”

Then she heard the school office phone ring, and Birdie knew it was her mother calling. She listened as the receptionist confirmed to Garcia-Bachman that the assembly had been canceled.

When they hung up, “the secretary looked at me and she said, ‘Birdie, you need to stop texting people. You need to stop telling people,’” Birdie told RANGE in an interview the week of the cancellation. “They didn’t want people to find out about this.”

Birdie met with Central Valley School District (CVSD) Dean of Students Jacqui Monks, who that day



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY VALERIE OSIE

**Central Valley High School graduate Birdie Bachman made her stamp on her high school through her Diversity Club work. Now she’s ready to take on the world at Howard University.**



COURTESY OF BIRDIE BACHMAN

**Birdie Bachman, second from left, with her brother, Baer and her parents, Brian Bachman and Maria Garcia-Bachman, at Birdie’s graduation from Central Valley High School.**

was the only administrator in the building. Birdie recalled that Monks “kept saying, ‘We want you to get it right. ... We don’t think you’re prepared.’”

Monks did not return a voice message or an email from RANGE requesting comment and listing specific questions for this story. But Nunberg responded, insisting that the students had in fact been unprepared to deliver the assembly.

“They didn’t have any organization or details worked out of what they were doing,” Nunberg said, alleging the students didn’t know who would deliver which parts of the script.

Birdie said the students were ready.

In an interview, she described the club’s preparation: “We have an advertising committee; we have an art committee; we have a script committee. Each of those groups had their role. We came together for the first couple of meetings, and we said, ‘What do we want our assembly to be about?’ And we basically decided that at the MLK Assembly this year, we want to focus on how our differences are what make us equal.”

The students had prepared speeches and printed 18 one-by-one-foot pieces of art displaying photographs of King’s activism. They even anticipated that crowd members – some of whom would sit in bleachers near the rafters – would not be able to engage with the presentation from a distance. So they decided they would ask the students to come to the stage and sign their names to a piece of art as a participatory element. Everything was in order on their end, she said.

But after telling Birdie the club was not ready, Monks told her there was “nothing I can do,” Birdie said. She suggested Birdie meet with the principal, and Birdie went home for the day.

Garcia-Bachman was angry. That evening, she sat down and wrote an email to Cindy Sothen, the executive academic officer for the Central Valley School District, to complain about the cancellation.

“I heard today the MLK, Jr. assembly is being canceled and am appalled it’s happening, and with such flimsy, offensive reasoning,” Garcia-Bachman wrote. “Ms. Monks seems extremely dismissive and I am shocked, not just by how she talked to the students who’ve orchestrated this assembly over the course of three months but also how she challenged them by saying assemblies have to captivate the young audience.”

She didn’t think it should matter whether the students were prepared; this was a learning experience that gives them the chance to succeed or fail.

“I was in high school,” Garcia-Bachman wrote. “You were in high school and I presume Ms. Monks went to high school. There were very few assemblies run by teachers and staff that captured my attention and it wasn’t without frequent reminders from the adults in charge that crowds quieted long enough to hear whatever it was the grownups needed us to know.”

Sothen did not return an email from RANGE requesting comment, but Nunberg said Sothen talked to Garcia-Bachman on the phone after receiving the email, which RANGE has read.

In her email, Garcia-Bachman proposed that CVHS administration hear the students out. They did. That Thursday morning, the students gathered their materials for the assembly and presented them to the school administration, including Louie.

“We basically said, ‘We’ve been prepared. This is our layout. We have everything here,’” Birdie said. “At one point they were like, ‘We actually need to physically see [the materials] to make sure you guys are ready.

So we had people run up to the room, grab everything they asked for. We brought it down here. ... But we were prepared.”

Nunberg did acknowledge the work the students did to get the assembly across the finish line, saying Birdie “worked to get the Diversity Club organized ... and then they were able to have that assembly.”

Whether the students in the club had been prepared or not, under Birdie’s pressure, the school acquiesced, putting the assembly back on the schedule.

Garcia-Bachman saw a pattern in the cancellation. In her email to Sothen – sent the day she learned of the assembly cancellation – she wondered aloud about the district’s commitment to diversity, citing racist slurs her children had heard slung in hallways.

“My half-BLACK children have told me on numerous occasions about the use of the N-word around the halls of Ridgeline and CV ... just like saying hello,” Garcia-Bachman wrote. “Does the admin actually care? When was the last required diversity training? How many Black, Asian and Latino teachers/staff does the district employ? When’s the last time the district did a recruitment activity to seek out diversity?”

RANGE asked Nunberg the same questions, and she responded, saying the last diversity training the district held was in the 2022-’23 academic year. Last year, they did a different training focused on Social-Emotional Learning. Nunberg said this training hit some of the same aspects of diversity training, emphasizing a “sense of belonging together.” She also said individual school improvement plans are designed to include a sense of belonging and equity.

In a brief phone interview, Nunberg admitted that the staff of the school was not as diverse as the student body. She sent RANGE a detailed breakdown comparing racial diversity among staff with racial diversity among students at CVSD. The numbers show disparities.

While more than 20% of students are nonwhite, a little more than 3% of faculty represent a racial minority. The disparity was most pronounced for the Latinx community at CVSD – while 7.17% of students identify as Hispanic or Latinx, only 0.8% of staff do. A little more than 2% of students identify as Black, while about .9% of staff do.

Nunberg said the district is planning to address these gaps as a long-term project, noting an official strategic plan developed in January 2023, which can be viewed on the district’s website.

“One of our initiatives underneath that is to develop and implement recruitment and hiring processes that promote a diverse representation of staff that reflects our student body,” Nunberg said, adding that any reported racist incidents are investigated through established school policies.

## Becoming the ‘next person’

This past weekend, Birdie’s parents helped her move into the dormitories at Howard, the historically Black Washington DC university that’s produced some of the most influential Black figures in American history, including U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall – the first Black member of the nation’s highest judiciary body – and Kamala Harris, who is currently the first Black woman running for the presidency at the top of a major party ticket.

Over the weekend, Birdie attended events where speakers talked to the incoming class about the grand opportunities that awaited. Stevie Wonder, whose granddaughter is part of her class, was at an event she attended Sunday night, she shared with excitement.

“They talked about Kamala and all of the amazing alumni, from Taraji P. Henson ... and Tony Morrison,” a celebrated actor and Nobel-winning author, respectively. “They were talking about, ‘You are going to be that next person. You don’t have to think: oh, what if I am that next person? We are going to do that.’”

Birdie is particularly excited for the introductory courses she’s taking this coming term, which starts on Monday, in Black politics and Black feminist theory (though she’s not as excited for the lone math class she’ll have to take).

Birdie will major in political science with a pre-law track. She hopes to write for the student newspaper, The Hilltop and to spin her already robust credentials into a career as a human rights attorney. She believes her advocacy for the diverse students at CVHS will give her perspective as he moves toward her professional goals.

“I wouldn’t have wanted any of this to happen in the first place,” Birdie said. “But it teaches me so many lessons. The world is never going to be perfect, and you have to stand up for what you believe in.”

BUSINESS AND FINANCE

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



By Rhonda Leonard-Horwith  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



date.

TERMINOLOGY

First, it is important to understand the language of life insurance.

- The “death benefit” or “face value” is the amount of money that will be delivered to the beneficiary upon the death of the insured.
- The “insured” is the one whose life is being covered.
- The “insurer” is the company to whom premiums are paid and that will pay the death benefit upon the death of the insured.
- The premium is the amount of money paid each month, each quarter, or sometimes biannually or yearly to the insurance company for the insurance policy.
- The premium is determined by the age, health, risky activities and coverage goals of the insured.
- The payor is the one who pays the premiums.
- The owner is the one who controls the policy. The owner, insured and payor can be the same person.
- The beneficiary is the one who receives the face value upon the death of the insured.
- Riders are extra benefits that can be added to a policy at a certain cost that is added to the premium. The best way to explain a rider is to compare it to a car purchase. If you want to buy a car, the car salesman will show you the basic, no frills, version of a particular kind of car you want. You can purchase extra enhancements for your car like leather seats or roadside service. These extras in the insurance world would be called “riders.” These riders include such things as disability or adding a child to the policy or no lapse guarantee or chronic care or critical care.

TYPES OF INSURANCE

There are three fundamental types of insurance: term, whole life, and universal life. Each has its own unique qualities and its own unique purposes, depending on the budget and the particular situation of the individual.

**TERM:** “Term insurance” is often called pure insurance. It is available to about age 80. No cash accumulates inside of a term policy. There are different types of term insurance including increasing term, level term and decreasing term. Term insurance is only purchased for a specific period of time, much like you sign a lease for an apartment for a specific period of time. This period of

time is called the “term”. The term is usually for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 or 30 years. The most notable feature of term insurance is that it is the cheapest of the three types of insurance. Once a term has expired, a new term can be purchased. The premium payment is set and remains the same for the duration of the term. However, with each renewal for a new term, the premium becomes considerably more expensive. A few types of term insurance are available with riders called “Living Benefits.” These living benefits include chronic care or critical care riders.

**WHOLE LIFE:** The second form of insurance is called “Whole Life Insurance.” Whole life insurance is permanent. Permanent means there are no terms involved. Whole life insurance, therefore, lasts for the whole life of the insured, usually until age 100. The face value is guaranteed to be paid out upon the death of the insured or upon the insured reaching age 100. Once the premium is set, the premium amount remains the same, it will not change for the duration of the whole life policy. Whole life premiums are more expensive than term premiums. Part of the premiums go into an account that accumulates over time. This is known as the cash value. Cash does accumulate tax-free inside of a whole life policy. The cash grows at a fixed rate. The insured can tap into the cash value by borrowing or partial withdrawal. This loan accumulates interest. If not paid back, the loan amount plus interest will be deducted from the face value upon the death of the insured and the beneficiaries will be paid the balance.

**UNIVERSAL LIFE:** The third type of insurance is “Universal Life Insurance.” Universal life insurance is also permanent and set to last usually to age 120, the age however, can be adjusted.

One of the unique features of the universal life insurance policy are the flexible premiums. These premiums also are more expensive than those of term life insurance. The premiums can be adjusted to a minimum or maximum. The insured will often pay the maximum over the initial years of the policy so that cash can accumulate quicker and premiums can be paid from this cash value. Another unique feature of universal life insurance is that the face value can increase overtime, with the cash accumulation being added to the face value yearly depending upon how the policy is structured. Like whole life insurance, part of the premiums of universal life insurance goes into an account that accumulates cash value overtime. This cash can grow in indexed accounts (not tied to the stock market) or variable accounts (tied to the stock market). Generally, cash growing in an index account benefits from market growth, but it is protected from market loss. The cash accumulation is tax free. This cash accumulation can be used as a surrender value. This is when the insured decides he/she no longer wants the policy and gives it back to the company. The company will then give the insured the cash accumulated called the surrender value. Cash value can also be borrowed for loans and paid back or not. Finally, the cash accumulation can also be used to pay for premiums. The insured has to make sure the cash accumulation does not run below the cost of insurance or the policy will lapse. Most universal life policies provide for such riders as chronic care, critical care, and long-term care.

ADULTING: CHALLENGES FACING YOUNG ADULTS



By Katia Jasmin  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



direction.

Finding direction after graduation

“The biggest challenge for me was figuring out what I truly want to do and where to find the right information on how things work,” Ryan explains. After finishing school, Ryan was excited to start his career, but quickly realized that the transition to adulthood wasn’t as straightforward as he expected. “It’s not really taught in school – what’s going to happen after,” he explains. Career opportunities may be out there, but they often lack the growth or satisfaction many are hoping to find. Ryan reflects, “You can find jobs, but there aren’t many that really offer a good path forward.”

Many of his peers feel the same – unsure of how to navigate this stage of life without proper mentorship or guidance. Ryan’s experience is all too common, with young adults left to figure out on their own how to balance a career passion, practicality and stability.

The importance of mentorship

Ryan emphasizes the gap in support systems for young people transitioning from school to the working world. “I wish I had more help understanding how to deal with employers and manage my money,” he shares. Practical skills, such as financial management and workplace communication, often aren’t covered in school, leaving graduates feeling unprepared for the realities of adult life. “The hardest part has been figuring out how to get my life started,” he admits, underscoring how much a caring mentor could help. “There just aren’t enough people who care about helping kids transition.”

Ryan believes that if more mentorship programs focused on guiding young adults through these early stages of life, it could make a significant difference, especially for those trying to establish financial independence and career growth.

**Financial independence**

One of the biggest hurdles Ryan faces is learning how to manage his finances. “I’m learning as I go, but it would’ve helped to know earlier,” he says, noting that financial literacy should have been a more central part of his education. Ryan stresses that balancing job searching, paying off debt, and planning for the future requires knowledge that many young people are still trying to grasp. Learning how to budget, invest, and save properly are skills he wishes had been taught more clearly in school.

Despite these challenges, Ryan remains focused on building a stable future. He emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence and financial literacy as key tools that empower young adults to make informed decisions and lay the groundwork for long-term success.

Looking to the future

Though Ryan faces many challenges, his outlook remains positive. His goals – achieving financial freedom, securing his own home, and building a stable future – are what drive him. “In the next five to ten years, I hope to be one step closer to financial freedom,” he says. Ryan is actively learning more about personal finance and taking steps to build a secure future where he can thrive.

Ryan’s journey serves as a reminder that young adults aren’t lacking ambition – they’re seeking the right tools and guidance to achieve their goals. His story calls for more comprehensive support systems to help young people confidently navigate life after school. Schools, communities, and mentors need to step up and provide the resources necessary for young adults to succeed in the real world.

“The road after graduation isn’t always easy, but with the right support, we can move forward with confidence.” Ryan’s advice to others is simple yet powerful: “Learn all you can about emotional intelligence and financial literacy.” With the right tools, young people like Ryan are ready to overcome the challenges ahead and build a fulfilling life beyond the classroom. His story is not just about personal growth – it’s a call to action for everyone invested in the future of our youth.

ywcaspokane.org/dvam

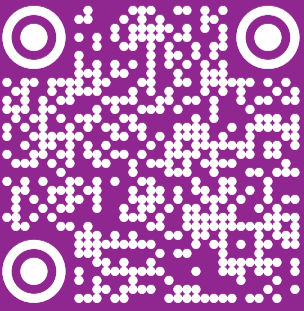


October Is Domestic Violence Action Month

Shine A Light For Survivors

Join Us This October

- **Oct 1 - 31** Access our free action kit full of graphics, flyers, and templates.
- **Oct 1 - 31** View beautiful artwork by a survivor at YWCA Spokane.
- **Oct 8, 17, 29** Attend a free training about intimate partner violence.
- **Oct 23** Join Pathways Forward, a free community discussion about the realities of reporting domestic violence.



eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**  
SPOKANE

Scan with phone.

HOMEOWNERSHIP IS A BRIDGE TO GENERATIONAL WEALTH



By Jacquelynne Sandoval  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



an agent, how to do a homes search, maintenance, title and escrow and more. The classes are designed to present each participant with options on how to become an investor or homeowner. The next workshop will be held on October 26th. Please see the flier for details.

Black Home Ownership Spokane is a cohort of non-profit organizations and companies. Members include Take up the Cause, Vision Properties, JSandoval Real Estate, the Carl Maxey Center, Habitat for Humanity, and Community Frameworks. Members of the cohort have come together with the common goal of helping the Black community possess the tools needed to own homes and build generational wealth. Classes have been held monthly, teaching participants about credit, budgeting, how to choose

POLITICS

# FROM HAMER TO HARRIS: 2024 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

By Priya Osborne  
NAACP YOUTH COUNCIL  
ADVISER



Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Chicago, Illinois – a city rich in Black history and the home of Emmett Till, Ida B. Wells, and Michelle Obama.

It was surreal to be a part of history in nominating the first Black and Asian woman as President of the United States. Vice President Kamala Harris, like many Black women before her, is a trailblazer – defying the odds set up against her as the daughter of an Indian mother and Jamaican father, both of whom immigrated to the United States to pursue what our country proudly touts: the American Dream, the land of opportunity, the country where anyone can achieve anything.

Well, in less than 80 days, we, the people, can make that a reality; not only for Vice President Kamala Harris, but for women and girls of color, for immigrants, for those watching across the world, and for you and me.

As I reflect on my experience as one of 110 elected national delegates representing Washington state, I’m reminded that my ability to stand here today is a direct result of the struggles and sacrifices made by those who came before me. Their fight for justice laid the groundwork for my participation in this historic moment.

In 1964, one such trailblazer, Fannie Lou Hamer, gave a live-broadcasted, gut-wrenching testimony at the Democratic National Convention about the violence she and other Black citizens of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party suffered—all for attempting to exercise their right to vote— courageously exposing the hypocrisy of this country for the world to see.

During her testimony, President Lyndon B. Johnson, who had signed the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination in public places, into law

Energizing. Electrifying. Empowering. Three words to describe what it felt like to attend the 2024 Dem-

just weeks prior, succumbed to white fragility when he pulled Hamer’s testimony off the air to divert attention from America’s racist actions. Yet, despite this unsuccessful attempt to thwart the efforts of the MFDP, risking their lives to secure representation for Black citizens of the United States, Hamer’s testimony was later broadcasted for the entire world to see; its effects reverberating through the consciousness of all.

In addition to Hamer’s powerfully vulnerable and vivid personal account of the dehumanizing disregard of Black citizens in the United States, Ella Baker, fellow activist, and coordinator of the MFDP, wrote a letter to convention delegates imploring them to seat members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party as delegates a part of the state’s existing Democratic Party.

Because of the efforts of Hamer, Baker, and the many others, both known and unknown, who lost their lives to the freedom struggle, Black delegates were permitted to partake in the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Though the number was small, only two delegates, it paved the way for today’s representation of Black citizens to nominate the first Black woman to be President of the United States.

Despite this momentous win secured 60 years ago, Black citizens of the United States still fight for equality. Through current voter suppression efforts led by extremists diseasing the Republican Party, policy has been implemented to take the United States of America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, back to the Jim Crow era and even back to slavery – dark, violent times in our nation’s history – where state and federally sanctioned violence tried to stifle the spirit of our African ancestors and prevent our sweet excellence from making this country, the country that we built, truly embody the very ideals that make us great.

These voter suppression efforts mirror the Jim Crow era by causing voting and voting registration to be inaccessible. This is happening through the passing of ludicrous laws, criminalizing people who provide basic necessities, such as food and water, to voters standing in line to cast their vote at



the ballot box. Or, through redistricting, a process of redrawing district lines based on population data, that occurs every 10 years.

District lines are meant to reflect not only population changes but racial diversity as well, which is important because it determines who will be represented in Congress and state legislatures.

Crooked politicians take advantage of this political process by manipulating the district lines, which can have entirely different outcomes on elections by blatantly cutting off millions of voters from utilizing the power of their vote.

The power of voting, both in local and national elections, was emphasized time and time again during the 2024 Democratic National Convention. In the words of Former First Lady Michelle Obama, we must “do something!” And, as Ella Baker said, “to do less at this historic moment would be a

disgrace” not only to our ancestors whose shoulders we stand on, but to future generations who depend on us to keep moving forward.

Friends, we are at the crossroads of hopelessness and hopefulness; however, hope is just a concept if there is no action behind it. So again, we must do something! This election is about our democracy and our freedom. It is time we look past red or blue, and make sure your vote comes through!

Our institutions are only as strong as the people we choose to represent us. So: educate yourself on our country’s history because when you know what you stand for you know what to fight for; make sure that you and everyone you know are registered to vote; and lastly, in the words beautifully delivered by Oprah Winfrey at the 2024 DNC, “let’s choose the sweet promise of tomorrow over the bitter return of yesterday.”

## WE ARE NOT GOING BACK: WHY MOVING FROM RESPECTABILITY TO AUTHENTICITY IS *ESSENTIAL NOW*

By Dr. Gina Clarke Sutton  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



palpable—a sense of history in the making that left the audience on the edge of their seats, cheering, crying, and standing in awe. When Michelle Obama took the stage, her voice strong and filled with the wisdom of her journey, she spoke not just to the audience in the room, but to every Black woman who has ever had to fight twice as hard to be seen. And then, the crescendo—the keynote from Kamala Harris, who promised soon to become America’s first Black, Asian, and female president. Her words cut through the noise, delivering a message that was both a rallying cry and a call for reflection: “With this election, our nation has a precious, fleeting opportunity to move past the bitterness, cynicism, and divisive battles of the past. A chance to chart a New Way Forward.”

For Black professionals, and Black women in particular, this truth has been a complicated one, long buried under the weight of respectability politics. But in this new era, the veneer is cracking, revealing a path forward that demands we abandon the safety of conformity for the power of authenticity. The stakes have never been higher, and the choice has never been clearer: We’re not going back.

### The high cost of respectability

Respectability politics – rooted in the belief that if Black people behave in a manner acceptable to the dominant culture, they will be treated with respect—has been a survival mechanism for generations. But this approach comes at a cost. A growing, critical body of research highlights the heavy toll that code-switching and assimilation take on the mental and physical health of Black professionals.

Santiago, Nwokoma, and Crentsil (2021) delve into the exhausting implications of code-switching for African American professionals. Their research outlines how navigating white-dominated spaces often requires Black employees to suppress their cultural identities, which can lead to a sense of alienation and emotional exhaustion. The mask of respectability becomes a prison, restricting the ability to express one’s true self in environments where authenticity could – and should – flourish.

The psychological toll extends beyond emotional fatigue. A recent study published in JAMA Network Open

The excitement in the air at the 2024 Democratic National Convention was

(Elbasheir et al., 2024) examines the intersection of racial discrimination, neural connectivity, and epigenetic aging among Black women. The findings are alarming: the constant stress of discrimination and the pressure to conform to White norms can accelerate biological aging. The implications are clear – respectability politics isn’t just stifling; it’s killing us.

### Authenticity as liberation

Kamala Harris’ ascent to the presidency isn’t just symbolic; it’s a signal that the time for half-measures is over. The energy of her campaign, bolstered by the voices of millions who refused to be silenced, reflects a seismic shift in how Black people, especially Black women, navigate power and identity in America.

As Johnson, Mattan, Flores, Lauharatanahirun, and Falk (2022) discuss in their work on linguistic racism, the consequences of code-switching and the pressure to assimilate extend far beyond the workplace. They ripple through our personal lives, our mental health, and our communities. Yet, as we’ve seen through Harris’s unapologetic embrace of her multi-faceted identity, authenticity isn’t just a personal stance – it’s a revolutionary act. By rejecting respectability and embracing authenticity, we reclaim our narrative. We refuse to let others dictate the terms of our success or define the limits of our potential. Authenticity means bringing our full selves to every table, every conversation, and every decision. It means recognizing that our unique perspectives aren’t liabilities to be managed but assets to be celebrated.

### A call to action

The 2024 DNC wasn’t just a political event; it was a watershed moment, a clarion call to every Black professional who has ever felt the pressure to conform. In the words of Michelle Obama, “If we see a mountain in front of us, we don’t expect there to be an escalator waiting to take us to the top. No, we put our heads down. We get to work. In America, we do something.”

As we move forward, let us commit to shedding the shackles of respectability politics. Let us foster environments where authenticity isn’t just accepted but expected. This shift isn’t just about individual liberation; it’s about collective empowerment. It’s about creating a future where our children don’t have to choose between their heritage and their success, where they can thrive in a world that values them for who they are, not for how well they can fit into a mold that was never meant for them.

We’re not going back. The future is ours to define, and it starts with the courage to be authentically, unapologetically, ourselves.

## HOW PROPAGANDA IS WEAPONIZED TO DEHUMANIZE AND *THE DANGER IT CAUSES*



By Charity Resian  
THE BLACK LENS  
RACE AND  
EQUITY REPORTER



inaccurate, exaggerated, or fabricated information that favors a political cause or player.

In today’s rapidly evolving world, the evolution of technology has significantly transformed the power of communication and media. The ways in which individuals connect, share information and shape public discourse are in a constant state of flux and largely susceptible to propaganda, particularly through social media platforms, which have created new avenues and reach for disseminating propaganda.

Throughout history, sophisticated propaganda techniques, such as fake news, deep fakes, and targeted advertisements, to influence public opinion and voter behavior have been deployed – patterns that have demonstrated that language can easily be weaponized against others and mobilized to incite others into action. Dehumanization of a target audience is a puzzling phenomenon.

During the Rwandan genocide, in 1993, a radio station known as Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) went live, and broadcasted “inflammatory rhetoric and extremist views” to the thousands of Rwandans; the Hutus identified the Tutsis with Cockroaches, fuelling the genocidal extermination of thousands of Rwandans.

In a similar theme Nazi propaganda likened the Jews to rats, but also portrayed them as ‘poisoners of culture’, swaying and manipulating mil-

lions of Germans to turn against the Jewish people. In the Soviet Union, the Stalinist regime called opponents vermin yet put them on show trials. Within the United States dehumanization has a rooted revolving history: American chattel enslavement of Black Americans between 1776 to 1865; the 1932-1972 Tuskegee Airman experiments on 600 Black men who were not advised on the real nature of the research study; the forced sterilization of majority of Black women across 32 states by Eugenics boards from 1932-1966.

These are just a snapshot of incidents of how dangerous propaganda can be against targeted populations. They reveal tensions in the way in which dehumanizers perceive, portray and treat victims and further highlights how such ideologies distort human relations to such an extent that it allowed people to view other human beings as fundamentally different from themselves.

In recent U.S. politics, certain words have become charged with an atmosphere of hate and division, heightened by the migration crisis and amplified by the gravity of the 2024 U.S. presidential election. Politicization of immigration is an ever-evolving complex issue, and has profound consequences not only for immigrants but all ethnic and racial minority groups. A consistent headline in the Trump campaign, the use of derogatory rhetoric, most notably referring to immigrants as ‘animals’ or recently spreading the baseless claims of ‘immigrants eating domestic pets’ during the 2024 presidential debate last week, further demonstrate how language can be used to dehumanize a certain group of people, destroy credibility and foster a wave of anti-immigration hate.

Political propaganda is not a new phenomenon; however, it plays a vital role in shaping the narrative. By controlling the agenda propagandists can shape the parameters of public debate around policy issues, often leading to policy decisions that reflect the interests of those in power rather than the public good. The strategic use of emotive language, imagery, and misinformation can manipulate public sentiments and polarize communities. This tactic leaves hefty implications on democratic process, governance, and social cohesion.

HUMANITY MATTERS

BL

NEWS

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**Corrections for September issue**

- “Swimming For Our Lives,” the concept of the NAACP supporting a lifeguard training program, came from NAACP member, Elin Zander, in collaboration with Emily Gwinn. Quinton Baker is the current Health Care Committee Chair.
- In the article “Stay Ready So You Don’t Have to Get Ready,” Clara Boston was misspelled in the caption.
- In the profile on City Councilwoman Roberta Greene, her first name was misspelled in a headline.

# The impact of presidential debates

## A personal reflection

**By Luc Jasmin**  
THE BLACK LENS

As I analyze the recent presidential debate, a pressing question arises: Do they truly influence voters? Many individuals, myself included, tend to have their minds made up before tuning in. I often watch debates to confirm my existing views rather than to be swayed.

In reflecting on the debate, I feel compelled to address Donald Trump’s disparaging comments made about Haitians in Ohio. His statement, which perpetuated the false narrative that Haitians were somehow “eating people’s pets,” was both harmful and dangerous. As a first-generation American, I found his remarks deeply offensive and damaging. They do not reflect the values of courtesy and respect I believe society should uphold; instead, they stoked the flames of hate and fostered harmful stereotypes against hard-working Haitians.

Regarding the handshake between the can-

didates, it’s worth noting that Kamala Harris had to make the extra effort to approach Trump’s podium in order to initiate that gesture. To me, this act symbolizes the value of acknowledging one another, something I deeply respect. In contrast, it seemed that Trump was held to a different standard, a reality often overlooked in our discussions about decorum and respect.

While I remain skeptical about the overall impact of debates on voter behavior, I believe it is crucial for our leaders to embody certain values. A true role model should exemplify integrity and respect for all individuals. As we consider the implications of this debate, it’s clear that we must hold our leaders accountable for their words and actions. We must also look past the talking points, and even the promises candidates make about how they will improve our lives and just ask ourselves, does this person treat people with respect and dignity?

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NEWS

EDITORIAL

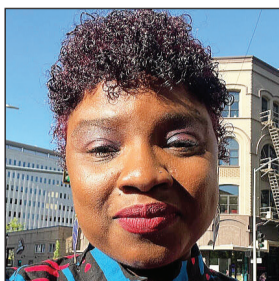
# OTHERISM: Ignorance is not bliss

Though it may sound like a far-fetched conspiracy from the pages of a tragic dystopian novel, human zoos, or ethnological expositions, were real events throughout the colonial era. Remnants of global imperialism eek into societal behaviors, like an etch-a-sketch tracing the past with new clothes. A marker of entitlement and privilege, human zoos are the lesser told stories, whispers that leave modern day conundrums void of historical context, opening the door for straw man fallacies and the reinvention of sadistic tropes. When dog whistles become cacophonous shrieks and grotesque biases graduate from implicit to explicit, it’s time to pull back the curtain and get uncomfortable.

Ideas of sub-humanity, savagery, ethnic inferiority, and racial fetishization were manifested in the colonial era of human zoos, which became the blueprint of the modern-day circus. Carl Hagenbeck was a German merchant of wild animals who supplied European zoos. He is considered the architect of ethnic shows, which became a trend during the 19th and 20th centuries. In 1874, Hagenback displayed Samoan and Sami people when animal exhibits became less lucrative. In 1876, according to the article “Staged Otherness: Ethnic Shows in Central and Eastern Europe, 1850-1939” (2021) by Hilke Thode-Arora, Hagenbeck sent for “wild beasts and Nubians” from Egyptian Sudan, from which a Nubian exhibit was put on tour in Paris, London, and France. Seeking to bring exotic displays to industrialized countries, the trend of making indigenous and foreign people spectacles took root. Western countries saw this exploitation as a way to solidify a message of superiority while also building capital. Let’s look at some examples.

South African woman Saartjie Baartman was put on display in London and France from 1810 until her death, at age 26, in 1815 because of her full posterior. She was sexualized and designated as “the Venus Hottentot” (hottentot is a term the Dutch used to describe the Khoikhoi people of South Africa and is considered a slur in

modern times). In 1878 and 1889, at Parisian’s World Fair, an exhibit called “Negro Village” was one of the attractions, where 28 million people came to see nude and semi-nude humans taken as spoils of war. Similarly, in 1895 at the Crystal Palace in London was a colonial African Exhibit. In 1906, Madison Grant, a eugenicist and head of the New York Zoological Society, displayed Oto Benga, a Congolese man, alongside apes in the Bronx Zoo; Benga struggled to live a normal life, and died by suicide via a gunshot in 1916. In 1925, Africans in alleged native dress were displayed at the Belle Vue Zoo in Manchester, England in an exhibit called “Cannibals.” In ethnographic expositions, indigenous peoples (not exclusive to Black people), were viewed by spectators in contrived natural habitats, and placed within a fence. In some cases, as in that of Bartmann, they were poked and touched. Anthropology was also used as a justification for these displays. Upon death, the remains of many were examined for scientific purposes. The essence of human zoos was to promote the idea that indigenous people of non-Western nations had not intellectually evolved, were uncivilized, and as such, deemed scientifically inferior. Centuries later, we are desensitized to the germane connection between ethnographic expositions, xenophobia, racism, and harmful nativism ideologies, all agents of



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INTERIM EDITOR



subliminal (or some would argue not so subliminal) indoctrination. Double standards exist in the immigrant community. The tale of perseverance and pulling oneself up by bootstraps hits differently when you are not emigrating from Europe. While the Ellis Island immigration journey is romanticized, certain immigrants catch the stray bullets of bigotry.

The bliss of ignorance is a pathetic excuse not to engage in the education of this ugly and painful history; ethnographic expositions have consciously and subconsciously affected us all. More than a stain, human zoos have left behind gaping wounds that have culminated into stereotyping, discrimination, corruption, and violence. In a time when diversity, equity, and inclusion are being sanitized or erased altogether, acts of bigotry and prejudice still live out loud. The language may be encoded, but the message is as clear as ever. In the hallways of schools, students dig deep into their arsenal of insults to hurl “monkey” slurs at Black kids on any given day. Or, maybe it has become a term of jest traded in someone’s best “Wild ‘N Out” rendition. When I hear this, I can’t help but think of Benga. Or Baartman. Or nameless others whose lives were ruined by ethnocentrism. This term, along with other racial and ethnic slurs, is the harvest of centuries old dehumanization and it should make every human being uncomfortable, lest you become one of the denigrated.

Human zoos are not fiction. They were the motivation behind imperialism, the energy behind capitalism, built on the back of human exploitation and begs the question of where the real barbarism lies. The boogeyman archetype has been conjured up so effectively that it has left an indelible imprint in the systems of entire nations. So, the next time you hear the direct or encoded language of bigotry, take time to discuss the history of ethnographic expositions and its impact on how we perceive others. Ignorance is passed down, and it is certainly not bliss.

NAACP  
Spokane Branch  
ELECTIONS

JOIN THE EXEC COMMITTEE

It's time for NAACP Spokane Branch Elections! We seek volunteers to serve the 2025–2026 Executive Committee term. Must be an active NAACP Member.

President

✔ Speaks for the Branch

✔ Leads all Exec and General Meetings

✔ Appoints Committee Chairs

✔ Approves Spending

✔ Field advocacy needs & issues

Vice Presidents

✔ Step in for President as needed

✔ Next in line if President leaves

✔ Supports branch and committees as needed

✔ Up too 3 Vice President roles

Secretary

✔ Meeting Notes (minutes)

✔ Communication with Branch

✔ Helps branch stay organized

✔ Supports committees

✔ Field requests from public

Treasurer

✔ Handles all the money

✔ Works with Bookkeeper (you do not need to be a finance expert)

✔ Lead Finance Committee

✔ Help prepare finance reports

Bonus: All NAACP Officers can attend NAACP National Convention, paid for by the branch!

We also seek 3–5 volunteers to support our Nominating and Election Supervisory Committee. Candidates for Officers Positions cannot serve. The expectations is 3–4 meetings between now and November election.

Timeline

✔ September: Elect Nominating Committee

✔ October: Recruit and form slate of candidates

✔ November: General Membership Votes

Please email

admin@spokanenaacp.org

To join nominating committee, ask questions, or express interest in a position.

## Engage in our future

As Spokane gets ready for its next electoral season, the NAACP Spokane branch invites you to take an active role in shaping the community’s future through informed voting and civic participation. The upcoming candidate forum, co-hosted with Thin Air Community Radio at the Spokane Public Library, is an opportunity to meet local candidates and hear about their vision for our area. This forum is more than just a chance to listen; it’s a platform for engagement, dialogue and accountability.

The stakes are high, and your voice matters.

IF YOU GO

### Candidate forum

**WHEN:** 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 15  
**WHERE:** Central Library, 906 W. Main Ave., Spokane  
**INFO:** events.spokanelibrary.org/event/9140005

THE BLACK LENS

Serving Spokane's Black community since 2015

IN MEMORY OF SANDRA WILLIAMS  
FOUNDING EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

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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.

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