

THE BLACK LENSTM

NEWS FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

A CHANGE HAS FINALLY COME

November Election Brings Historic Changes to Spokane School Board and City Council



*It's been a long time coming,
but I believe my change
is gonna come. Oh, yes it is.*

- Otis Redding

The results of the November 2019 local elections brought with them some historic changes to the Spokane community. First, political newcomers Nikki Lockwood and Jenny Slagle, both women of color, were voted onto the Spokane School Board. Their presence, along with that of Jerrall Haynes, who has been serving on the School Board since 2015, brought the number of people of color on the Board to three, which is a majority. In addition, Haynes was selected to serve as the new School Board president.

In addition, the election of Breean Beggs as City Council President left a vacancy on the Council. Betsy Wilkerson was appointed to fill that vacancy in front of a standing room only crowd during the January 13, City Council Meeting. Wilkerson is the first African American to serve on Spokane's City Council in two decades. Wilkerson was sworn in by Judge George B. Fearing during the community MLK Service at Holy Temple COGIC on January 19.

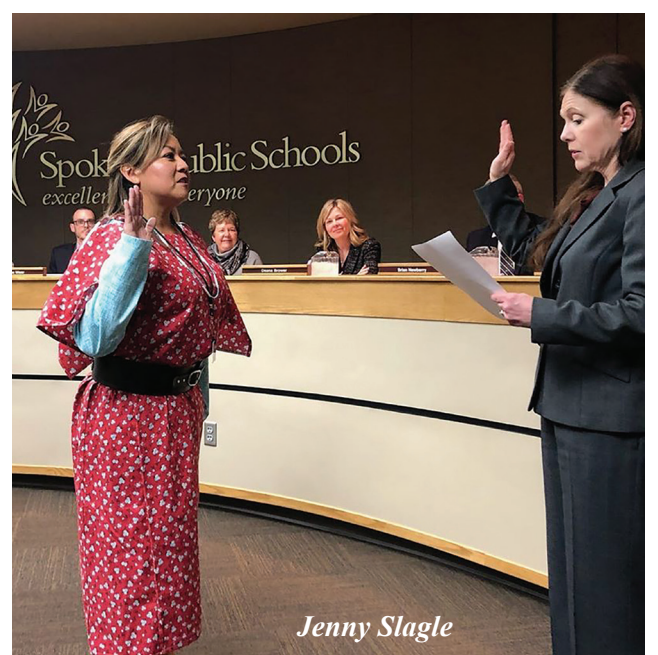
During the months of March and April, the Black Lens will be featuring in-depth interviews from all of these change makers. So stay tuned. A change is coming!



Nikki Lockwood



Jerrall Haynes



Jenny Slagle

WE SHALL WIN BY LOVE

Thurs. Feb. 6
12-1:00 pm
MON 205
Daudi Abe
Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting in the Principal's Office Together?

Thurs. Feb. 13
12-1:00 pm
MON 205
Logan Camporeale
Racially Restrictive Covenants in Spokane: A Legacy of Segregation

Thurs. Feb. 20
12-1:00 pm
MON 205
Dr. Okera Nsombi
Bigger Than Hip Hop: Influence of Hip Hop Culture on Society

Thurs. Feb. 27
11-4:00 pm
MON 205
African Studies Annual Silent Auction

EWU Africana Studies Program Black History Month Events

Africana Studies Program | 204 Monroe Hall | Cheney, WA 99004 | Please call 509-359-2205

ON MY MIND

THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

by Sandra Williams

This Month I'm Blackity Black Black



Living and thriving while Black in a place like Spokane, well everywhere actually, requires the ability to understand and participate effectively in what I call, "the dance". How effective you are in dancing that dance in mainstream Spokane, I believe, can equate proportionally with how many doors will open up for you, with how many opportunities will show up for you, and with how financially successful your life turns out to be.

Because of that reality, during this Black History month, in this newly unfolding decade, I want to have a conversation about the dance.

What is the dance, you may ask? Well, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, dance is "the movement of the body in a rhythmic way, usually to music and within a given space, for the purpose of expressing an idea or emotion, releasing energy, or simply taking delight in the movement itself."

Dancing, in all of its various forms and incarnations, has been and continues to be an integral part of the Black community and Black culture. After all, the Soul Train Line is literally an institution for us, and we'll create a dance out of just about anything (ie. cabbage patch, running man, wobble, stanky leg).

But for Black folks, the term "*to dance*" has another meaning entirely. It is to recognize when you are perceived by white folks as being just a little *TOO Black* in a situation and then intuitively side-stepping or back-stepping or moonwalking your way back into their comfort zone.

Most of us have been there, at least once. Things are going wonderfully fine between you and your liberal friends, you and your progressive co-workers, you and your woke social justice allies, and then you do something, or you say something, or you ask what you thought was a pretty benign question, and in an instant, in the blink of a mosquito's eye, all of the air that everyone has been collaboratively, collectively, inclusively breathing for hours or days or months or even years gets sucked right out of the room.

And those same progressive, liberal, woke, inclusive folks realize, perhaps for the very first time, that you are Black. Not "as close to white as possible" Black or "trying desperately to fit in" Black or "I'm not gonna ruffle no feathers" Black, but Blackity Black.

James Baldwin Black. Angela Davis Black. Malcom X Black. Colin Kaepernick Black.

Remember when Beyoncé included Black Panther symbolism in her 2016 Super Bowl half time performance and white America went bonkers, many realizing for the first time that her highness, their musical royalty, was actually Blackity Black Black. The air seemed to get sucked right out of the entire country. In fact, some police departments threatened to not provide security for Beyoncé's national tour after that realization (that is until the Nation of Islam offered to do it for them).

When the *TOO Black* threshold gets crossed, Black folks know it instinctively. Like a wild animal instinctively knows their environment has all of a sudden become unsafe, It's like an alarm bell goes off, in our gut. Danger. Danger. And that alarm triggers an evasive response. The dance. It's practically automatic.

Perhaps the dance is a smile, to make us appear less threatening. Perhaps the dance is a joke to try and ease the tension. Perhaps the dance is a re-framing of our question or comment, to make it feel more palatable. Perhaps the dance is us compromising or deferring or backpedaling or even our silence.

But whatever it is, the dance is a part of our Black conditioning, a deeply ingrained survival mechanism. Both literally and figuratively. Because for our ancestors, to dance well was to stay alive. And make no mistake, we are all here because they did it well.

But that was then, and during this Black History month, in this era of #BlackLivesMatter and demands for reparations, I would like to pretend that I have always been above the dance. Too strong for a side-step. Too self-confident for a back-step. Too Blackity Black to shuffle into safer more comfortable territory. But that wouldn't be the truth. And as the bible says, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

So in Black History month 2020, in this year of 20/20 clarity, as I celebrate my TOO Black Blackity Black Black self, I plan to recognize the instances and the ways in which I am still dancing. And to stop! Because I believe that I, and that we, owe ourselves and our community so much more than our mere survival.

THE BLACK LENS NEWS

The Black Lens is a community newspaper, based in Spokane, WA, that it is focused on the news, events, issues, people and information important to Spokane's African American/Black Community and beyond. The paper is published on the first of each month.

Contact Information:

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Subscriptions:

Delivered monthly by mail - \$45/year - subscribe by mail or online

Submission/Advertising Deadline: 15th of every month

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YOU ARE INVITED TO A

PUBLIC MEETING

“NSC/I-90 Interchange Design Updates”

When	Time	Location
Thursday February 13, 2020	5:00 - 7:00 PM With Formal Presentation @ 5:30 PM	MLK Jr./East Central Community Center 500 Stone Street Spokane, WA 99202

Focus Area

The meeting will focus on design considerations for the North Spokane Corridor (NSC) connection to I-90 in the vicinity of the Liberty Park interchange. These proposed changes will likely lead to reduced congestion along I-90.

Please join us to learn about

- NSC connection to I-90
- Noise study
- Access between the NSC, I-90, and the local network
- NSC and Children of the Sun Trail placemaking update

Can’t make it in person?

To learn more about the NSC, Children of the Sun Trail, and Placemaking project, visit us at NSCPLACE.COM

For more information contact

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WSDOT Eastern Region
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(509) 324-6089
hilmesb@wsdot.wa.gov

Charlene Kay, P.E.
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Planning Director
(509) 324-6195
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Translation Information

If you need this announcement translated and/or translation during the meeting contact (WSDOT Office of Equal Opportunity) at 360-705-7090.

Elaññe kwaikuj bwe en ukok kõjjeļã in im/ak en ukok ilo iien kweiløk eo kūrlok ak kepaak (WSDOT Office eo an Equal Opportunity) ilo 360-705-7090.

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Nếu quý vị cần thông báo này được dịch và/hoặc thông dịch trong cuộc họp này vui lòng liên hệ (Văn Phòng Cơ Hội Bình Đẳng Bộ Giao Thông Vận Tải Tiểu Bang Washington (WSDOT)) theo số 360-705-7090.

Если вам нужен перевод этого уведомления или переводчик во время собеседования, Пожалуйста позвоните в Отдел анти-дискриминации транспортного отдела штата Вашингтон (WSDOT Office of Equal Opportunity) по телефону 360-705-7090.

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YOU SHOULD KNOW

(Or Things You Probably Didn't Learn In School)

ART AND HISTORY by Bertoni Jones Bey

Elizabeth Hobbs Keckley

Elizabeth Hobbs Keckley (also spelled Keckly) was a successful seamstress and author who was born into slavery in 1818 in Dinwiddie, Virginia. The early years of her life were spent doing chores and being verbally and physically abused. Her mother's master, Colonel Armistead Burwell, worked for Hampden-Sydney College, the oldest privately chartered college in the South. Elizabeth took the surname "Hobbs" believing that a slave named George Hobbs was her father. It was later revealed that in fact her master, Colonel Burwell, was her father. By age twenty Elizabeth was raped and became impregnated by an unnamed Caucasian man, the second generation of women in her family impregnated by slave-owners. (*Interesting how a people claiming "genetic superiority" had no problems laying down with the "genetically inferior" help*).

Early on in her life, Elizabeth's mother taught her the art of sewing and dressmaking which laid the path to her success. Her owner moved to St. Louis for work, taking Elizabeth and her son George with him. Ten years before the 13th Amendment, with the help of anti-slavery supporters, Elizabeth purchased her and her son's freedom for fifteen-hundred dollars –a tremendous sum of money at that time.

In 1860, Elizabeth moved to Washington D.C. with her son. Her goal was to establish herself as a private business owner and professional seamstress. She would in fact become the most celebrated fashion designer (modiste) in the nation's capital, with a client list of the most distinguished politicians and military wives. Some of her clients were the wives of Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, and Frederick Douglas. Her work soon caught the interest of then First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln who invited Elizabeth to the White House the morning

after Lincoln's inauguration. Elizabeth became not only The First lady's exclusive dress designer, but later a close confidant, and family friend. Their bond grew even stronger when both women lost their sons only seven months apart.

In her 1868 memoir, "Behind the Scenes: A Memoir: Elizabeth Keckley", she details the overwhelming grief felt by the Lincoln Family's loss of their son Willie. Elizabeth again comforted Mary after her husband was assassinated on April 15, 1865. Mary Todd Lincoln, beside herself in grief, refused to leave the White House as her husband's body traveled back to Illinois.

Unfortunately, the 1868 memoir signaled the end of their friendship. Elizabeth shared things with the writers that she did not authorize to be included in her memoirs, revealing private moments of the Lincoln family. Back then the information was considered scandalous, and for the details to be revealed by "the help", herself a former slave, just three years after slavery's end tested all societal limits. Mary and the Lincoln Family would have nothing to do with Elizabeth from then on.

Elizabeth stated: "If I have betrayed confidence in anything I have published, it has been to place Mrs. Lincoln in a better light before the world. A breach of trust – if breach it can be called – of this kind is always excusable. My own character, as well as the character of Mrs. Lincoln, is at stake, since I have been intimately associated with that lady in the most eventful periods of her life. I have been her confidant, and if evil charges are laid at her door, they also must be laid at mine, since I have been a party to all her movements" (pg. 14).

In 1862 Keckley founded the Contraband Relief Association, which offered food, clothing, and shelter to newly-freed



slaves, but by 1890 her private business succumbed to the impact of her memoir and she accepted a position as head of The Sewing and Domestic Arts Department at Wilberforce University in Ohio. She retired to Washington D.C. and passed away on May 1907, owning next to nothing.

Sources:
Behind the Scenes – Elizabeth Keckley.
Black Heritage Day III – Jamiyo Mack.
whithousehistory.org/elizabeth-keckley
thoughco.com/Elizabeth-keckley-1773488
docsouth.unc.edu/highlights/keckley.html

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NAACP UPDATE:

SPOKANE

NAACP

1919-2019 CENTENNIAL

http://www.SpokaneNAACP.com

Hello Spokane,

I am Le’Taxione and I serve as one of your Spokane NAACP Branch Executive Committee, Member(s) At Large. It is my Honor to Introduce myself in this article and to speak to you on behalf of the Spokane NAACP Branch #1137.

I believe we find ourselves in a very precarious dispensation of time. The year 2020 marks the beginning of a new decade, but even more than that, 20/20 is more than just a year- it is a visual prescription. When one has 20/20 vision, it is said that their vision is perfect - clear - unobstructed by misperception- an intentional manner in which one views the future.

In such a time as these, one must be sure that one is not found engaging in activity that is not the manifestation of our most clearest vision. For a lack of vision, as the scripture teaches, is what caused the death of a people.

Our Branch President, Kurtis Robinson, has informed me of his concept and implementation of “Restorative Accountability”. Its intention is to hold one accountable, but in ways that invite transparency, uplift, integrity, and that call forth the need for change, yet restore interactions that may have been negatively impacted by that lack of accountability. He said “Integrity invites transparency and calls forth accountability.”

It is in this vein that the “Impacted Youth Forum” was conceived, for there can be no restoration of accountability when one is not informing those who are accountable.

It is our visceral intention to hear the circumstances and the challenges that lie therein from the mouths of our impacted youth, in their voice. So that we may, as organizations, either funded or charged with the stewardship of the life force, can create not only an effective strategy but also an environment of healing that our youth can access without experiencing the red tape which acts as a deterrent and or impediment to the accessing of services.

As everyone knows, it is only after serving 22 years of a life sentence without the pos-



sibility of parole that I’ve been permitted to matriculate back into society and what I’ve found is that the most effective way for one who has been incarcerated for a significant amount of time to matriculate back into society is to get involved in social justice and change, for it restores the voice that one may have lost while incarcerated and it is the other part of ones debt.

We all overstand (I believe in being over our standing rather than under some one else’s) the debt that we must pay to society and that debt is one that consists of, for the most part, servicing the State. But what about the debt that we owe to the communities that we helped to ravage in our ignorance?

We have a debt to also serve our communities so that we may reestablish our place among those in our communities that we both failed and led astray while engaged in criminogenic thinking and activity.

We must return, just as the “prodigal son,” yet our return must be marked by our service and sacrifice to model behaviors and activities that will strengthen our communities intracommunal bonds and assist in the construction of avenues for our youth that are “in risk”.

In Struggle!

Le’Taxione
NAACP Member At Large, Author, CEO N’STEP,
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SPONSORED BY: NAACP-Spokane Branch #1137 and SFCC
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Resource Tables Available

Just Mercy: Film Screening & Book Discussion

Rogers HS Invites Community to Participate in Both Events

The students of Rogers High School are inviting the Spokane community to join then for two important upcoming events related to the newly released film *Just Mercy*, which stars Michel B. Jordan and Jamie Foxx and is based on the New York Times bestselling book by Bryan Steven.

Just Mercy chronicles the experiences and painful revelations of young attorney and Harvard graduate, Bryan Stevenson, who heads to Alabama to defend those without proper legal representation and those wrongly sentenced to die. Along the way, Stevenson's eyes are opened to the racism that exists in our broken criminal justice system.

Just Mercy is winner of the Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction • Winner of the NAACP Image Award for Nonfiction • Winner of a Books for a Better Life Award • Finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize • Finalist for the Kirkus Reviews Prize • An American Library Association Notable Book

Rogers ProjectLIT book club will be discussing Just Mercy on *Monday, February 3rd, from 2:45-5pm in Room N204-206 at Rogers High School (1622 E Wellesley Ave, Spokane, WA 99207)*. The community is invited to join Rogers students in a conversation that will focus on the book and on social justice.

On *February 19*, Rogers High School will be hosting a screening of the film Just Mercy, which was recently released and is based on the book. The screening will take place at the Garland Theater (924 W Garland Ave, Spokane, WA 99205) and will be followed by an important community discussion.

The time for the screening is still to be determined, but information will be available soon.

Tickets for the screening are \$10 and all proceeds will go to support Rogers High School ProjectLIT and BSU. Those who attend the book club discussion on February 3rd will receive a free ticket to the February 19 screening.

For more information and to purchase tickets to the movie screening, contact Pastor Shon Davis at *ShonD@spokane-schools.org*.

BLACK NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Local, State, National and Around the World

Washington State House Passes Nation's First Statewide 'Office of Equity'

(Source: housedemocrats.wa.gov; [seattle-medium.com](https://seattlemedium.com/))

OLYMPIA – Legislation (House Bill 1783) aimed at reducing systemic disparities within Washington state government passed off the House floor 56 to 41 on January 20, 2020.

The bill would set up an Office of Equity within the Governor’s Office and would be tasked with helping state agencies identify practices that perpetuate systemic inequities, recommending best practices and providing implementation and training assistance.

While many state agencies in Washington are engaged in reducing systemic disparities, there is no current coordinated statewide plan. This has left state agencies encountering challenges in the development and sharing of resources across state agencies. The Office of Equity would streamline the process. If enacted into law, it would be the first statewide office of its kind anywhere in the nation.

“This is about bringing equality for all to every community in Washington,” said Rep. Mia Gregerson, D-SeaTac, who sponsored the legislation. “Inequities impacting historically marginalized people



Rep. Mia Gregerson, D-SeaTac



Rep. Melanie Morgan, D-Parkland



Sen. Manka Dhingra, D-Redmond

run deep and they come at far too great a social and economic cost.”

House Bill 1783 was introduced during the 2019 legislative session. While the bill was not passed last session, a proviso in the 2019 – 2020 operating budget (House Bill 1109) founded the Office of Equity Task Force. Throughout the interim, the task force opened public comment and held public meetings across the state in Tacoma, Vancouver, Yakima Valley and Olympia.

“The Office of Equity is the right action at the right time to help assure every person in Washington has a fair and promising opportunity to thrive,” said Benjamin

Danielson, MD, co-chair of the task force. “To help envision the Office, a Task Force has worked diligently to hear from a broad set of communities and has operated with a commitment to bold action. Through the Task Force’s efforts state government entities will enhance their abilities to be responsive to communities, will utilize the best tools to measure their equity work and will be accountable to deliver on their roles in making lives better across the state.”

“I have confidence in the collective wisdom and courage of the task force to want to get this right and set a different course for our children and the generations to come,” said Jan Olmstead, who co-chairs

the task force with Danielson. “[This] is an important step forward to securing an equitable future for those historically disregarded and harmed by the existence of systemic inequities built within our state structures.”

“Disparities in Black and African American communities exist due to the way systems were formed. Our systems are not inclusive for Black and African American communities, women, people with disabilities, and people identifying as LGBTQ+,” said Rep. Melanie Morgan, D-Parkland.

“The creation of the Office of Equity will help to ensure we are truly addressing the needs of ALL Washingtonians as we begin to pave new roads to the ‘American Dream’.”

“We need an Office of Equity to take a systematic approach across our state government to promote access to equitable opportunities and resources that reduce disparities, including racial and ethnic disparities, and improve outcomes statewide,” said Sen. Manka Dhingra, D-Redmond, who sponsored companion legislation (Senate Bill 5776) in the Senate.

The 60-day Washington State legislative session will conclude on March 12, 2020.

Black History Month Flag to Fly Over Spokane City Hall During in February



When you pass by Spokane's City Hall during the month of February, remember to take a look up at the flag pole. The Spokane NAACP will be flying a flag over Spokane's City Hall during the month of February 2020 to celebrate Black History Month.

The flag, which was designed by Mickias Getnet with support from the Spokane NAACP, contains the Pan-African colors (also known as RGB), which are red, black, and green, or red, gold and green.

Red represents the blood of the martyrs. **Black** represents the color of the people and fertile soil. **Green** represents the fertile fields of Africa. **Gold** represents the wealth of Africa, peace, harmony and/or hope.

A proclamation in honor of Black History Month will be read on Monday, Feb 3, during the Spokane City Council meeting which starts at 6pm. The meeting takes place in the City Council Chambers, downstairs in city hall at 808 W Spokane Falls Blvd, Spokane, WA 99201. The community is invited to attend.

Walter Larson Monument to be Dedicated in May

Historical Monuments Committee Looking for Information

The Spokane Historical Monuments Committee, comprised of history enthusiasts, authors, and members of the Jonas Babcock Chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution, working in liaison with the Fairmount Memorial Association, are working to find all the information possible about Walter Lawson for a monument that will be dedicated in his honor in May, 2020.

Walter Lawson was born in Clark County, Virginia, in January 1862. His parents were Thomas and Susan Lawson. Known in the military as Walker Lawson, he was a private in the 25th Infantry Regiment US Cavalry in the Indian Wars from 1886 – 1891 in Montana. This regiment was a segregated unit of Black soldiers and was referred to as the Buffalo Soldiers. This nickname was given to the Black Cavalry by Native American tribes who fought in the Indian Wars.

During his time in the military, the 25th Infantry was stationed in the Dakotas, Minnesota, and Montana. The regiment was involved in the Ghost Dance War in 1890 that ended with the Wounded Knee Massacre.

Lawson also spent time in Montana as a cowboy. He married Millie Langford on July 3, 1893, in Helena, Montana and, in 1906 their only son, Walter T. was born. After coming to Spokane in 1894, Lawson took a job



Walter Lawson
1862-1917
Buffalo Soldier, Police Officer

as a porter in the Wilmot Hotel in the downtown area.

He was hired as a special police officer and began working for the police department in a full-time capacity in September 1899 as a mounted officer. He then served as a patrolman for several years. Lawson was the patrol wagon driver for many years when it was a horse-driven vehicle, and finally ended his tenure as the department’s chauffeur of the new automobile.

Lawson worked for 18 years in the police department. He was on duty

six days before his death, when he fell ill with an acute intestinal disorder. At the time, Lawson was Badge #4, meaning he was the fourth longest tenured officer on the police force. Lawson died on May 13, 1917. At the time of his death, he was the only African American serving as a policeman on the West Coast.

“He was absolutely fearless, and his self-control and forbearance in situations made difficult by the fact that he was colored were remarkable. He would go anywhere, and his record as a policeman was above average.” This statement was made by Captain George Miles.

According to Police Chief William J. Weir, “Walter was a rare fellow who never intruded anywhere, and he was well liked by all of us. We admired him not only as a man but as a faithful and brave officer.”

Lawson was a member of the Inland Empire Lodge of Colored Masons and the Eastern Star. News articles lauded him as, “one of the bravest officers who ever wore the blue or swung a nightstick.”

Walter Lawson's dedication ceremony will be the third week of May at Spokane's Greenwood Memorial Terrace. If you have any further information or know of possible family members for Mr. Lawson, please contact RaeAnna with the Historical Monuments Committee asap at 509-892-6945.

BLACK NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Local, State, National and Around the World

Kobe Bryant, Daughter Gianna & Seven Others Killed in Helicopter Crash

(Source: Stefanie Dazio, Christina Maxouris and Darran Simon, apnews.com; Barrington M. Salmon, TriceEdneyWire.com)

CALABASAS, Calif. (AP) — NBA legend **Kobe Bryant**, his 13-year-old daughter **Gianna** and seven others were killed in a helicopter crash on a steep hillside in dense morning fog in Southern California on Sunday, January 26.

The chopper went down in the hillside near Calabasas, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) northwest of downtown Los Angeles.

The AP reported that pilot, Ara Zobayan, told air traffic controllers in his last radio message that he was climbing to avoid a cloud layer before plunging more than 1,000 feet (305 meters) into a hillside, according to an accident investigator.

During a Monday news conference, Jennifer Homendy of the National Transportation Safety Board said that Radar indicated the helicopter reached a height



of 2,300 feet (701 meters) before descending. The wreckage was found at 1,085 feet (331 meters).

Homendy added, the pilot had asked for and received special clearance to fly in heavy fog just minutes before the crash and was flying at 1,400 feet (427 meters)

when he went south and then west. The pilot then asked for air traffic controllers to provide "flight following" radar assistance but was told the craft was too low for that assistance, Homendy said.

About four minutes later, according to Homendy, "the pilot ad-

vised they were climbing to avoid a cloud layer," but when ATC asked what the pilot planned to do, "there was no reply."

Radar data indicates the helicopter climbed to 2,300 feet (701 meters) and then began a left descending turn. The last radar con-

tact was around 9:45 a.m. Two minutes later, someone on the ground called 911 to report the crash. The helicopter was said to have been 20-30 feet from clearing a hilltop when it crashed.

Bryant leaves behind his wife Vanessa, who he married in 2001, and three daughters (Natalie, 17, Bianka, 3, and Capri, less than a year old).

The other passengers killed in the crash include: pilot **Ara Zobayan**; **John Altobelli**, longtime head coach of Southern California's Orange Coast College baseball team, his wife, **Keri** and their daughter, **Alyssa**, who played on the same basketball team as Bryant's daughter; **Christina Mauser**, a girls' basketball coach at a Southern California elementary school, and the defensive specialist for Bryant's team, the Mambas; **Sarah Chester** and her daughter **Payton**, who was also a teammate of Kobe's daughter, Gianna.

Atatiana Jefferson's Mother Dies Months After Texas Police Killed Her Daughter



Source: A. Woods, newsone.com; Darran Simon, cnn.com; Photo Source: Twitter)

The Atatiana Jefferson tragedy just keeps growing.

Yolanda Carr, the mother of Atatiana Jefferson, the woman who was shot and killed October 12, 2019 by a Fort Worth, Texas police officer inside of her own home, died on January 9. The family's attorney Lee Merritt confirmed the death.

Atatiana was killed by the police officer while serving as the caregiver for her recently ill mother who she had moved home to take care of.

Carr had watched from her hospital bed as a Texas grand jury indicted Aaron Dean, the former police officer who shot her daughter, sobbing, "Thank you, Jesus." She passed away a few weeks later in her home. The cause of death had not been released at the time of this printing.

According to CNN, Carr's death is the third in the Jefferson family. Atatiana's 59 year old father, Marquis A. Jefferson, suffered a cardiac arrest within weeks of Atatiana's killing. Family members said he died of "a broken heart."

Addressing the deaths, family attorney Merritt said in a statement: "Police brutality impacts entire families, communities and generations. There is no doubt Ms. Carr's recovery was complicated by the tragedy of her daughter's death and the difficulty associated with the ongoing fight for justice. We will continue the fight in her honor."

CEO Opens Two New Branch Offices to Increase African American Homeownership



(Source: blacknews.com)

Las Vegas, NV — Ben Slayton, President and CEO of LEGACY Home Loans, recently opened two new branch offices in predominately African Americans communities.

Headquartered in Las Vegas, Nevada, Slayton's company is one of the most successful Black-owned mortgage banking firms in the country, and he continues to make good on his commitment to empower African American communities throughout the United States with a focus on building sustainable wealth through homeownership and leaving family legacies.

One of Slayton's new branch offices is located in President Obama's hometown, Hyde Park, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. The branch office is managed by Leonard Pollard, a 25-year veteran of the mortgage business. The other new branch office is located in downtown Atlanta, Georgia, the hometown of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Tony Bryant, another 25-year veteran of the mortgage business will oversee that location.

LEGACY Home Loans currently has branch offices located in Los Angeles, North Hollywood, Atlanta, Tucker, Georgia, Baton Rouge, Denham Springs, LA, Shreveport, Dallas, and Houston. Slayton's goal is to open branch offices in every city in the United States that has 25 percent or more African American population and to hire local mortgage professionals in Black communities and give them the tools, loan programs, and resources, they need to compete head to head with any mortgage lender in the United States.

According to Slayton, what makes LEGACY different from other mortgage companies: when one of his existing branch offices becomes successful, he takes the profits from that branch and opens other branches in our Black communities, hiring local people in our communities, and helping to recirculate the money within our Black communities. For more information, visit the company's website at www.MyHomeLegacy.com or call (702) 425-3374.

Danielle Outlaw Becomes First Black Woman Commissioner of Philadelphia Police Dept



(Source: goodblacknews.org; Elizabeth Wolfe and Saeed Ahmed, cnn.com; Photo via Portland Police Bureau)

NBC News reported in December that former Portland, Oregon police chief and Oakland, CA native **Danielle Outlaw** will be the new Police Commissioner of Philadelphia. She is the first Black woman to hold that position.

NBCnews.com reported Philadelphia Mayor, Jim Kenney, as saying: "I am appointing Danielle Outlaw because I am convinced she has the conviction, courage and compassion needed to bring long-overdue reform to the Department." Beyond addressing issues within the Philadelphia Police Department, Kenny said Outlaw will also work to "curtail violent crime and gun violence." More people were shot in Philadelphia in 2019 than in any other year since 2010, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Outlaw, who is a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police Human and Civil Rights Committee, as well as the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, was the first African American woman to be police chief in Portland and had served in that role since 2017. Speaking of her appointment Outlaw said, "I do not take lightly that I am a first here. I understand what I represent, I understand who opened the doors for me and I understand it's my obligation to hold the doors open behind me to ensure that we're not in 2020 still talking about firsts." She added: "I am convinced there can be humanity in authority; they are not mutually exclusive." She is expected to begin her new role in early February.

AFRICA NEWS

News Highlights From and About the Continent of Africa

Liberians Rejoice Over a Promised Path to U. S. Citizenship

(*TriceEdneyWire.com/GIN*) – As the Trump administration turns down an ever-growing number of applications for asylum, it surprised many that some 5,000 Liberians in the United States have been granted a path to citizenship.

In fact, it was the product of decades of effort by the Liberian community and its allies.

“This has been a 20-plus-year fight where people have not known their fate,” said Abena Abraham, co-founder of the Black Immigrant Collective, speaking to Sahan Journal in Minnesota. “The passage of this is a relief. It assures Liberians that the U.S. is their home.”

The provision was buried in the \$738 billion defense appropriation bill for fiscal year 2020 under “Other Matters.” It will allow Liberians to apply for green cards under the National Defense Authorization Act titled “Liberian refugee immigration fairness”.

Under the provision, about 4,000 Liberians living in the U.S. can apply for permanent residence within one year of the legislation’s enactment. Qualified Liberian



nationals will have lived in the U.S. continuously since Nov. 20, 2014 and not absent for more than 180 days in total.

Anyone convicted of a violent crime, or an individual who has participated in the persecution of any person on account of race, religion, nationality or political opinion would be prohibited.

Only one year ago, scores of Liberians in the U.S. feared deportation after President Trump set an expiration date of March 2019 for Deferred Enforcement Departure.

But just days before the deadline, the administration quietly issued an executive order extending the program until Mar. 30, 2020. And now, Liberians can apply for

permanent residency before the expiration of their current statuses.

“This breakthrough is a testament to the power of organizing, and what a focused movement can do,” said Patrice Lawrence, the National Policy and Advocacy Director for the UndocuBlack Network.

“Our pleas have been heard,” Democratic Councilwoman Debi Rose of North Shore said. “When this bill is signed by the President, hundreds of our neighbors will no longer be living in limbo.”

Meanwhile, back in Liberia, thousands turned out to protest the deepening economic crisis under President George Weah with more than half of the 73,000 public service workers not receiving their full their full salaries in November and December.

GLOBAL INFORMATION NETWORK creates and distributes news and feature articles on current affairs in Africa to media outlets, scholars, students and activists in the U.S. and Canada. Our goal is to introduce important new voices on topics relevant to Americans, to increase the perspectives available to readers in North America and to bring into their view information about global issues that are overlooked or under-reported by mainstream media.

Jailed Ugandan Activist Wins PEN Prize for Freedom of Expression

By Damola Durosomo

(*Reprinted from okayafrica.com*) - Stella Nyanzi, the Ugandan academic, activist, and vocal critic of President Yoweri Museveni has been awarded the 2020 Oxfam Novib/PEN International award for freedom of expression, given to writers who "continue to work for freedom of expression in the face of persecution."

Nyanzi is currently serving a 15 month sentence for "cyber harassment" after she published a poem in which she wrote that she wished "the acidic pus flooding Esiteri's (the president's mother) vaginal canal had burn up your unborn fetus. Burn you up as badly as you have corroded all morality and professionalism out of our public institutions in Uganda."

According to the director of PEN International, Carles Torner, her unfiltered outspokenness around the issues facing her country is what earned her the award. "For her, writing is a permanent form of resistance in front of a regime that is trying to suppress her," said Torner at the award ceremony.

During the ceremony, which took place in The Hague, Netherlands, an empty chair was used to represent Nyanzi's absence, reports The Guardian. The activist did, however, manage to send an acceptance speech from prison. "Unlawful laws are used in unjust courts to punish citizens whose only crime is exercising their constitutional freedom to write boldly about the dictatorship," wrote Nyanzi.

"My custodial sentence in a maximum security prison highlights how fearful this dictator and his cronies are of writers," she added. "Isn't the pen, indeed, mightier than the sword?"



Nyanzi case highlight's Museveni's constant crackdowns on opponents and critics of his 30-year-old regime. Members of the press and public figures such as Bobi Wine have also been regular targets of the president's attacks.

Nyanzi perviously spent a month in prison in 2017 for referring to Museveni as "pair of buttocks."

"Though her words might be colourful and shocking to some, this is not enough to justify the imposition of penalties," Jennifer Clement, PEN International president, is quoted as saying. "Public officials should tolerate a higher degree of criticism than ordinary citizens."

Previous winners of the award include Cameroonian activist and journalist Enoch Meyomesse, as well as Ethiopian journalist Eskinder Nega.

International Essence Global Black Economic Forum Held in Ghana

(*Black PR Wire, blackpressusa.com*)

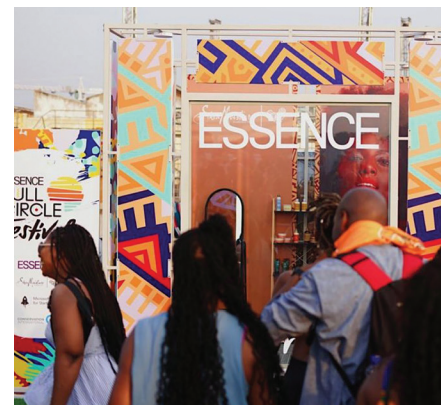
– The first international Essence Global Black Economic Forum was held in Accra, Ghana during the eight day Essence Full Circle Festival experience which ran from Dec. 27 through Jan. 3. The Forum commemorated Ghana's "Year of Return," honoring common heritage and celebrating African ancestry, culture and achievement.

The mission of the Essence Global Black Economic Forum: Africa, which took place at the Movenpick Hotel, was to create new opportunities for economic development, cultural exchange and opportunities for the private sector to help sustainably drive development and transform African communities on the continent and across the Diaspora.

The Forum was a centerpiece of the activities at the week-long Essence Full Circle Festival and convened entrepreneurs, executives, entertainers, influencers and government officials to establish an agenda to drive economic and cultural collaboration among Black communities globally.

In addition to the Essence Global Black Economic Forum: Africa, engagement activities during the week included cultural and heritage experiences in Cape Coast, Kumasi, and Ada, city tours of Accra, local events, and a Service and Exchange Day in Accra on Jan. 2 that included volunteer initiatives as well as entrepreneurship and creative industry masterclasses.

The Essence Full Circle Festival is a venture between Full Circle Festival, LLC – founded by Boris Kodjoe, Bozoma Saint John, and Patrick Kodjoe, all of Ghanaian descent, and Nicole Ari Parker – in partnership with Essence Ventures, an independent consumer technology company



– founded by Liberian entrepreneur, investor and social impact innovator Richelieu Dennis – that merges content, community and commerce and is the parent company of Essence Communications, Inc.

The inaugural Full Circle Festival took place in December 2018 and brought more than 100 guests to Accra for cultural engagement and ancestral reconnection, resulting in an estimated economic impact of more than \$70 million in tourism revenue for Ghana.

Under the newly-formed partnership, the Essence Full Circle Festival is focusing on a three-part mission: (1) supporting cultural ownership and economic collaboration among Africans on the continent and people of African descent in the Diaspora; (2) connecting Black communities globally for the exchange of ideas and shared objectives that leads to cultural monetization and community reinvestment; and (3) facilitating the global learning and discovery of African nations as ancestral, spiritual, cultural and commercial epicenters.

For information visit essencefullcirclefestival.wrstbnd.com. This article originally appeared in the South Florida Times.

Tongues of Fire

By Beverly Spears

Beautiful are the Souls of All My People



Recently, I got hooked on the television series *Greenleaf*. I was late to the show, and I binge-watched three seasons on Netflix. *Greenleaf* is a fictional drama that takes us inside the secrets and lies world of Bishop James Greenleaf, and the First Family of a predominantly African-American mega-church set in Memphis, Tennessee.

Greenleaf's characters and storyline are fictional, and perhaps overly stereotypical. Fiction *Greenleaf* may be, but its storyline is not far-fetched. Many people watch this series for its entertainment value, but many watch and see the pathologies of African American churches, large and not so large, reflected.

Oprah Winfrey is the Executive Producer of the series and plays one of the characters in the series. Winfrey insists that in *Greenleaf*, she is not denigrating the church. To those who ask if that's exactly what she's doing, she responds, "I do everything from the point of view of intention, and the intention in all of my work is to raise consciousness and lift people up."

In *Greenleaf*, Oprah sets a mirror before us and asks that we look honestly and faithfully at church culture, in hopes that we can transform and transcend hypocrisy and intolerance, and in hopes that we will stop turning a blind eye to behavior that is both personally and collectively destructive.

Greenleaf feels familiar, most often uncomfortably so. Many of us can identify with the pain of lost faith and the elation of new and renewed faith, or the tragic consequences of alcohol and drug abuse. But the First Family of the fictional "Calvary Fellowship World Ministries" are entangled in more deeply disturbing issues—issues that take a massive toll on them personally, and on the faith community they shepherd, or more accurately, the Church they control and manipulate.

Incest, sexual predation and pedophilia take center stage in the *Greenleaf* drama. We don't want to own it, but we know these gross violations of power and trust happen, too often at the hands of men in church leadership positions. While I don't believe this kind of predaciousness rises to the level of the commonplace in our faith communities, this behavior has nonetheless been shamefully covered up in our families and in our churches for far, far too long a time.

The series' themes of abuse of power and money in mega-churches is drawn straight from the headlines. We hear more about it in connection with megachurches, simply because there is more money, more power, and megachurch leaders have higher

profiles. But trust and believe, power and money can corrupt no matter the size of the church.

Classism, homophobia and just plain mean-spiritedness are deeply characteristic aspects of much of Black church culture. *Greenleaf*'s spotlight on homophobia in the Black church is a prime example of Oprah Winfrey's consciousness-raising intentions. The Black church has long been a master of "don't ask, don't tell."

In complex curiosity, the Black church is paradoxically both *homophobic* and *homo-tolerant*. I don't think most Black churches openly preach animosity against LGBTQI people, but neither do they make a point of welcoming and affirming them.

Even if homophobia is not openly preached, it is prejudicially overlooked. In many churches, LGBTQI people active in the church risk their reputations and their jobs if they live their sexuality out loud.

Gay people serve in every capacity in the church, from the choir to the Deacon board. Keith Boykin, CNN political commentator, and host of BET TV current affairs talk-show *My Two Cents* says, "Many of our Black churches would stop running if the gay, lesbian and bisexual members dropped out." Boykin is both Black and gay.

However, there are Black Christian denominations where a pastor will very definitely preach "hell and damnation" for "sexual deviants" from the pulpit. Author and openly gay gospel singer E. Patrick Johnson says the arrangement is both hypocritical and exploitative: "On the one hand, you're nurtured in the choir, but you also have to sit through some of those fire and brimstone sermons about homosexuality being an abomination."

Johnson believes that modern gospel music itself is largely defined by the artistry of Black gay men. What a sad commentary it is that in 2020 in America, when so many legal and social justice gains have been made by LGBTQI folks, those who identify as Christians can be authentically who they are everywhere except in a so-called House of God.

I have deep ties to beloved friends in Birmingham, Alabama. On a recent visit, a friend asked me who I most liked in the overcrowded field of Democratic presidential candidates. I answered that I hadn't made up my mind, and we started talking about the merits and demerits of various candidates. I said that I found Mayor Pete Buttigieg interesting. My friend screwed up her face and said emphatically, "Oh, not me! I saw him kiss his husband on

TV. I could never get used to there being a President and his 'First Man' in the White House. God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve."

Before my friend's father died, he had been a prominent Bishop in the Church of God in Christ, the denomination that most closely resembles the fictional Calvary Fellowship World Ministries in *Greenleaf*. Here is the Church of God in Christ's official statement on sexuality and same sex-unions:

"We believe that the homosexual practices of same-sex couples are in violation of religious and social norms and are aberrant and deviant behavior. We believe that these unions are sinful and in direct violation of the law of God in that they are a deviation from the natural use and purpose of the body. Therefore, in spite of the progressive normalization of alternative lifestyles and the growing legal acceptance of same-sex unions, we declare our opposition to any deviation from traditional marriages of male and female... we resolve that the Church of God in Christ stand resolutely firm and never allow the sanctioning of same-sex marriages by its clergy, nor [sic] recognize the legitimacy of such unions."

The Church of God in Christ is the largest Pentecostal-Holiness denomination in the Country, and with 12,000 churches and 5-million members, it ranks as the fifth largest Christian denomination in the United States. That's a lot of overt African-American Christian homophobia.

In the mid-eighties, I belonged to a large, prominent Baptist church with a much beloved Pastor and First Family. No vitriol against gay people was ever preached from the pulpit. But there was a code of silence. Before the decade was over, two of the Pastor's three sons, one of the Associate Pastors, and the Choir Director had died of AIDS-related illnesses, all within a few years of each other. I hoped such tragedy would have at least resulted in an AIDS awareness ministry, if not some deep soul-searching and spiritual transformation in the congregation. Sadly, none of that happened. I've read several articles challenging the prevailing belief that Black people are more homophobic than white people. That's not my focus here. My intention, like Oprah's, is to raise awareness and encourage enlightenment.

Adding to the Black homophobia paradox is the fact that so many of our most revered writers, poets, musicians and entertainers were LGBTQI. Their numbers include writers and poets like Alice Moore Dunbar, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, Lorraine Hansberry, and Nikki Giovanni; entertain-

ers like Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Josephine Baker, Billie Holiday, Ethel Waters, and Moms Mabley; and the civil rights icon Bayard Rustin, among many others. Most of these gifted artists and leaders were closeted all their lives. The truth of their sexual orientation was often an open secret in the Black community.

It greatly disturbs me that LGBTQI sisters, brothers, and others are second-class congregants in any faith community or denomination, regardless of the racial or ethnic makeup of its congregants. But it breaks my heart that full-fellowship in the Body of Christ in Black churches is conditioned on them hiding their wholeness. This long-standing hypocrisy and exploitation regarding LGBTQI people needs to evolve.

For me, God long ago ceased to be a bearded white man in the sky passing judgment on his creation. That vision of God was created by men in their own image. That punitive God has been used throughout history to justify white superiority, slavery, and misogyny. In my heart and mind, God is *Source*; the source of all love, peace and wisdom. God's love is boundless. Who are we to pass judgment on who is worthy of a boundless God's boundless love.

The God of love is also the God of Jesus. I'm a follower of the Way of Jesus, and Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love God, love our neighbors and love ourselves. Jesus excluded no one who wanted to know God more deeply. I hold steadfastly to Jesus' teaching -- his call to love, and his inclusion of all people.

The hopeful news is that slowly more Black churches are becoming more openly welcoming of LGBTQI people, and "Welcoming and Affirming" Black churches are being newly established.

Iconic 20th century Black Poet Langston Hughes was a gay man. One of his most beautiful poems is called, *My People: The night is beautiful / So the faces of my people / The stars are beautiful / So the eyes of my people / Beautiful also is the sun / Beautiful, also are the souls of my people.*

The souls of LGBTQI sisters, brothers and others are beautiful! God knows that. It's time all who call ourselves Christians open our hearts and minds and receive all beautiful souls into the full life of our spiritual communities.

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Rev. Beverly Spears is an ordained American Baptist minister, teacher and preacher of Evolutionary Christianity.

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Because I Love You

By Kiantha Duncan

The greatest lessons in life

The greatest lessons in life actually come from death. I have always been consumed with thoughts of dying. In my case it could have actually come from the trauma I’ve experienced. Seeded trauma has a way of planting fear in your mind and soul. In my adult life, I tend to work harder and do as much as possible to make good on my time on earth. In a way it has felt like I needed to get so much in so that at the time of my death my life would have been a life well lived. My obsession with a life well lived has likely distorted my living. I have struggled to celebrate accomplishments and success because I am hyper focused on what I need to do next. The thought of aging and being in those last moments of life lamenting on what I could have done differently or more of scares me. My theory has always been to do more and do it faster so that I get it all in.

Somehow through the deaths of others my view of life has begun to shift. As strange as it may sound, and I do admit that it is a bit strange, attending or watching (YouTube) memorial services and funerals has been my primary classrooms for these lessons. Recently a popular mega pastor in Texas lost his wife of 50 years. During her service countless individuals testified to her character and the impact she made on the world. Her husband spoke of all the ways in which she was actually responsible for his success. Through her fervent prayers, helping him to study for exams and even writing his papers as he pursued his education. Although I didn’t know her personally, she sounded like an amazing and loving woman.

And just like that, he then took me to school. What he said again changed the way in which I see life and death. “What we must all know is that not all of us will get to see a long life well lived as my wife did. Some of you are young but you are actually already old”. He went on to talk about how the idea of planning out your life in a way in which you wait for this or that to happen before you do this or that is foolish. He explained something that in all my “thinking” about death I had never thought about.

Because none of us know the exact time in which we will be born or die, if you are 20 years old but your death will be at age 24 you are already old in your life. If you are 20 and your death is at age 80 only then can you be considered young. In retrospect, I think about the countless times I have heard people say things like, “when my kids are grown and out of the house I will do…” or “when I retire, I am going to finally live my best life and do…”. It sounds foolish saying those words considering none of us are privy to when the moment of our death will come.

Because I love you, I am sharing with you the cliff notes of some of my lessons recently learned through the death of others.

1. You cannot run out of time. The time you have allotted on this earth is all that you have and what you accomplish during that time is up to you. Whatever you accomplish is what you were meant to accomplish. That was your lot in life.
2. Put off nothing. If you have a dream or desire, do



it and do it now. You may be waiting for a time that is not actually assigned to you. According to statistics, most won’t make 80 years or more. Some won’t make it to 25 and many don’t make it to 50.

3. This is it. The time that you are waiting for is now. Dream now, actualize those dreams now. Love now, be kind now, and most of all truly live while you are alive because you may already be close to your death at whatever your current age.

Kiantha Duncan is a Principal Development Strategist with The Duncan Brown Group. She can be reached at 206-225-4736.

ON KSPS IN JANUARY/FEBRUARY



Dave Chappelle:
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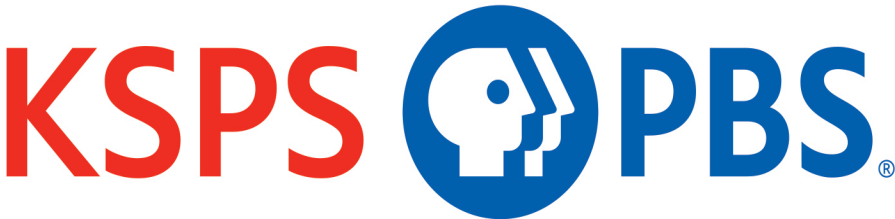


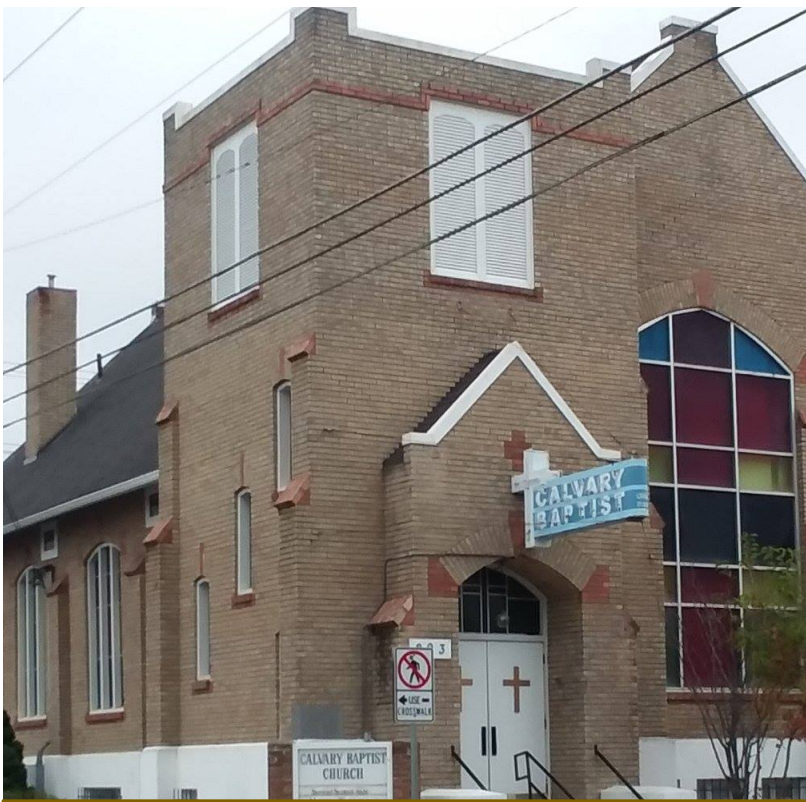
Finding Your Roots with Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
“Slave Trade”
Tuesday, Feb. 25 • 7 pm



Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool
American Masters
Tuesday, Feb. 25 • 8 pm

The man behind the legend. The film features never-before-seen footage, including studio outtakes from his recording sessions, rare photos and new interviews.





And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

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SPokane CELEBRATES

2020 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr March and Rally



The Dream, Through A New Lens

By Saron Zemedkun

Hello, my name is Saron Zemedkun and I am originally from East Africa, Ethiopia to be exact. I moved here when I was about 4 years old. I had to basically re-learn how to talk when it came to speaking English, so bare with me y'all. I am the president of the Ferris High School BSU club and a proud citizen of these United States.

I am so grateful to Mrs. Freda Gandy and the MLK committee for allowing me this opportunity to speak at this year's Martin Luther King Jr. March, a day on and not a day off.

And this is...The dream, through a new lens.

It's not a coincidence that this year's rally falls upon the year of 2020. A numerical expression that has been used to determine the health of one's vision and ability to have a clear focus and line of sight. My question would be, what lens are we seeing America through?

In 1963 Martin Luther King Jr. spoke from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, of the America that he saw then, and the America he dreamed it to be.

Though he dreamed of an America where one day former slaves and former slave owners would be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood, an America where people would not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character, yet he refused to ignore the America that he was seeing.

An America where Blacks were considered 3/5th of a man and deprived of equal rights. An America where Blacks were denied civil liberties, forced to sit on the back of the bus, denied fair housing, employment, and oppressed from voting within a government called democracy.

Has the dream of '63 become blurred, or do we need new lenses to see that change has come, but only disguised as equality with no equity?

Until we place equal value through the economic streams of minority business owners, equal pay for women, city and government jobs that reflect the demographics of the communities that they serve, as simple as school teachers and administrators that look like me, we are still not equal.

As a young Black woman I am troubled by the America that I am seeing. I have seen many African-Americans being dragged into the depths of deprivation and despair by the wrong image and labels placed upon us by main stream society. It's obvious that Black Americans have to work twice as hard to get half as far as their white colleagues would.

Oppressed by the intersecting forces of colorism and systemic racism, as it pertains to status and equity. Internalized colorism and being inequitable is an adapted behavior within our community. When does being born Black, equate to being born a crime.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said that "Injustice anywhere, is a threat to justice everywhere".

History has proven that African Americans have been the most unprotected race in America, as it pertains to social justice, causing the mortality rate of African Americans to have increased tremendously. Recent FBI data has shown that Black males ages 15-34 were nine



times more likely than other Americans to be killed by law enforcement, with a 1% chance of there even being an indictment.

Why is it that we are constantly being told how to walk, talk and dress, so that we don't drive any suspicious advances while out in the public? Is it really the clothes I wear, or my skin color that scares? What really is the threat!

Martin Luther King Jr. chose not to remain silent around the brutal killing of an Emmitt Till, the assassination of Medgar Evers, the multiple lynchings in Mississippi, to the Jim Crow laws of a segregated south.

Yet my generation is frowned upon for crying out around the "Hoodies" of a Travon Martin, The "I can't breath" of an Eric Gardner, the "hands up don't shoot" of a Michael Brown, the Sandra Bland's jail cell conspiracy, to the 2 second deescalation of a Tamir Rice. And if that's too far removed for some of you, how about the Botham Jean and Atatiana Jefferson, killed while sitting in the privacy of their own homes.

Is social injustice only a threat to us, or is it a threat to the fabric of our constitution, when we choose to ignore it.

As Doctor King said, "For in the end, it is not the words of our enemies that we will remember, but the silence of our friends."

America needs to look forward to a tomorrow where peace and love overpower evil and hatred. Where all people, regardless of our ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation and political beliefs, can stand united and honor the creed of our constitution that all men are created equal.

Where we are not choosing to be offended by the expressions of Black Lives Matter, not when there is equal value around the expressions of White Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, and so does Brown, Yellow and Red Lives Matter. At the end of the day, All Lives do Matter!

So, as we march today in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy, let us march in step with one another, at the sound of true freedom. Looking through the lenses of 20/20 vision, of an America where everyone has a right to "Life, Liberty And The Pursuit of Happiness".

Thank You

Saron Zemedkun was a 2020 MLK March Speaker

Photos Courtesy: Steve Watts and the Black Lens

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Community Church Service

**Pastor James &
First Lady Shawn
Watkins**

CELEBRATING KWANZAA 2019

The Spirit of Kwanzaa

By Denise Stripes
for Wilburn & Associates, LLC

On December 29, 2019, Wilburn and Associates, in conjunction with Northwest Winterfest, held their second annual Kwanzaa Celebration, immersing a corner of Spokane’s Northtown Mall in the beauty of African culture. The area was tucked away from the mall traffic, and the décor—as well as the aromas of the foods crafted by local vendors—offered a warm and intimate setting rather than the sterile environment one would expect in a mall. The walls were painted in warm colors and graced with beautiful African art. Just behind the dais, a small tapestry presented a village scene, with palms and other trees, a hut, and people working under the sun—a representation of community, the central theme of Kwanzaa. On the dais, two chairs presided, anticipating the arrival of the Kwanzaa King and Queen; at their side, African djembes awaited their cue to provide the musical backdrop for the celebration. Just before the dais stood the kinara, a holder for the mishumaa saba, the seven candles. The gathering of spectators included people from a medley of ethnicities who came to share in the festival, which illuminated, for those of us without a clue, the meaning and spirit of Kwanzaa.

The observance began with some ceremony; we stood as James and Roberta Wilburn heralded with drums the arrival of the Kwanzaa Queen, Stephy Nobles Beans, and the Kwanzaa King, Cecil Jackson. When the Queen and King were seated, James Wilburn signaled, with the drum, the beginning of the offering of libations. Roberta Wilburn later explained to me the meaning of this tradition, asserting that, while she would not normally cite Wikipedia, it actually gives a good definition for libations: “In African cultures [...], the ritual [generally performed by an elder] of pouring libation is an essential ceremonial tradition and a way of giving homage to the ancestors. [...] A prayer



is offered in the form of libations, calling the ancestors to attend.” To put this African tradition into the context of the African-American celebration, James Wilburn adds, “Libations is contributing your being and success to those who sacrificed for you being here. Libations are done in threes because three is the biblical number of completion. You pay libation three times, recalling what your ancestors did that made it possible for you to do or be able to do the things you want to do.”

In the course of the ceremony, James honored those who struggled and survived, citing several key events, in three stages, and pouring libations for each stage. The first period represented the struggle for freedom, and spanned from the first Africans who arrived in 1619 off the Virginia Coast and were made slaves to the abolishment of slavery in 1835. It is important to note that these first arrivals did not come here as slaves; they were poets, royalty, fathers, mothers, elders, and citizens from all walks of life, who lived in freedom and dignity, but had that stripped from them. Forced into slavery, they were not, in and of themselves, slaves. The second stage represented the struggle for citizenship and equal rights. Wilburn cited the 1868

ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which finally recognized the inherent rights of the freed people to equality and citizenship. The third stage gave homage to those who struggled for the right to vote, citing the 1870 ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, which implemented the right of African-American men to vote, and the securing of the right for women to vote in 1920.

After the libations were offered, Roberta Wilburn gave a brief history of Kwanzaa, explaining the symbols, the seven principles, and the colors. Kwanzaa is a seven-day celebration, not a religious festival, but an homage to family, culture, and community. The seven days of Kwanzaa exemplify the seven principles: Umoja, Unity in the family, community, nation, and race; Kujichagulia, Self-Determination, that the people will define, name, create for, and speak for themselves; Ujima, Collective Work and Responsibility, to build and maintain the community; Ujamaa, Cooperative Economics, to build and maintain the community’s businesses; Nia, purpose, to build the community in order to restore the people to their traditional greatness; Kuumba, Creativity, to leave the community more beautiful and beneficial than they inherited it; and Imani, Faith, to believe in the people, and in the righteousness and victory of their struggle.

The kinara holds the mishumaa saba, the seven candles that light the way, presented in three colors: three green candles for the land of Africa, three red for the blood that was shed in the struggle, and one black candle for the people, to show that black skin is not a badge of shame. On a mkeka, a mat representing the history, stands the kinara and the Kikombe cha umoja, the cup that represents unity; the mazao, or fruits and vegetables for the harvest; the muhindi, ears of corn that exemplify the children and the future; and zawadi, gifts for the children.

Since December 29 marked the fourth day of Kwanzaa, JaNese Howard and Roberta Wilburn

lit four of the candles on the kinara, and then Olynda Stone, in her beautiful voice, praised God, singing, “Lord I will lift my eyes to the Hills,” a powerful message from Psalm 121:1 about looking to God for help during hardships. While Kwanzaa celebrates community rather than religion, faith is an integral part of a community, another way to unite a people. This principle was also reflected in the performance from the Spokane Community Gospel Mass Choir.

The ceremony continued with Gaye Hallman’s poem about the seven principles and how they work together, Mona Martin’s beautiful dance, James Wilburn’s drums, and Lillie Pirie, who read a children’s story called “The Feast.” Michael Bethely gave a poem titled “To You,” telling the beauty of the people: “You are imperfect, and that is flawless,” and JaNese Howard spoke from a teenage perspective, saying, “I stand here today as a strong black girl...It’s so important for me to know who I am and where I come from.” Howard concluded by proclaiming, “I am a queen; I am beautiful; I am worthy; I am Kwanzaa.”

The Kwanzaa Queen, Stephy Nobles Beans, recited a poem extolling the beauty of the African countries, with the antiphon, “Way down in my soul.” With her many accomplishments here in the United States, her African roots remain in her soul, an inspiration to her and to those in her sphere of influence. Cecil Jackson, Kwanzaa King, who works with young people in track, as well as encouraging them to finish school, spoke of the graduation rates of young black people, stressing the importance of getting involved and being part of the solution. He also shed light on Kwanzaa’s fourth principle, speaking of the importance of a “co-op economy,” the keys to which are: first, supporting one another; second, strength in numbers; and third, faith in one another.

Lastly, James Wilburn stressed the importance of those who lived through the atrocities of the past with the story of the djembe. These drums were used in Africa to communicate between people, tribes, and countries, and James told how the slaves would entertain their masters with the drums, all the while using the drums to communicate and free the people. They demonstrated the principle of striving and thriving, when the masters took the drums away, by tapping the same messages with their feet. One of an oppressor’s most insidious tools is to remove the means of communication from the oppressed. By maintaining communication through innovation, among other accomplishments, these men and women fought for the future of their people, and paved the way for all who persevered through the days of Jim Crow laws and the Ku Klux Klan, and for those who continue the struggle today, and who honor their forebears in the spirit of Kwanzaa.





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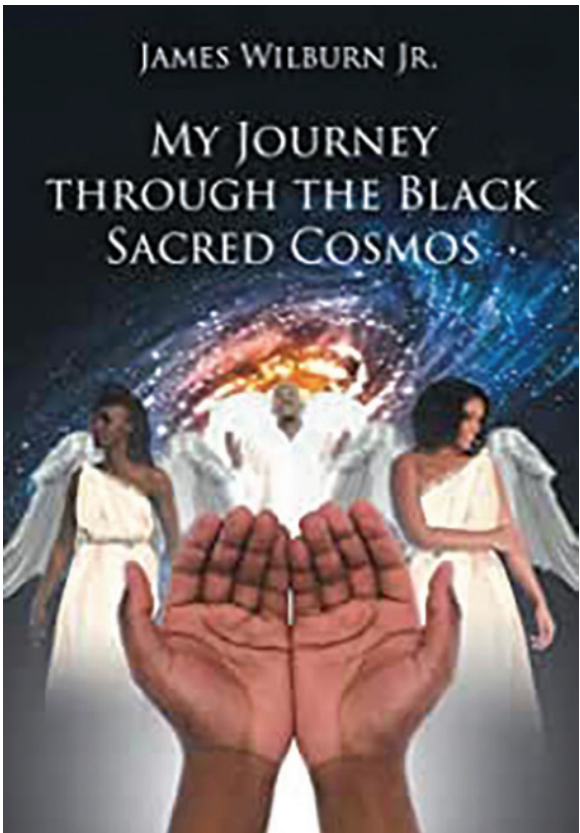
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Artist: Dorothy Mukasa, WA - Ink and Water Color Drawing of Janelle Monae



James Wilburn: My Journey Through the Black Sacred Cosmos

Local Author to Share New Book During February Event at South Hill Library

My Journey Through the Black Sacred Cosmos is a memoir written by James Wilburn, Spokane resident, former NAACP President and current Commissioner for the Office of the Police Ombudsmen. The deeply personal book chronicles the life of "one individual's experiences from adolescence until adulthood."

James Wilburn's parents and school teachers taught him socially and academically how to take care of himself in a hostile world. Yet once he left home for college, he began to realize how difficult it would be to fit into a world "outside of his Sacred Cosmos."

In order to survive, Wilburn had to search out who he was as an African American. He discovered that many things were excluded from his educa-

tional experience concerning his history and cultural identity, and he was left questioning why he was hated so much for the color of his skin. This caused him to delve deep within himself, trying to understand what it really meant to be an African American, as well as the deeper, rarely discussed, issues of race and racism.

According to Wilburn, "it was only after he learned to know and love himself that he could better understand and love others."

"Our education system is failing a large percentage of our children because it refuses to change its one-size-fits-all curriculum. Our teachers are certified to educate from a Eurocentric perspective instead of approaching our children with a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens."

Wilburn feels that our children today cannot wait as long as he did, because the world is much different now. He hopes the book will clarify some complex issues children often face by peering into the window of what he had to endure and the importance of how the unseen hands within the Black Sacred Cosmos guided him through life.

James Wilburn will be sharing his book on February 29 at 4pm at the South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry St, Spokane, WA 99203.

James Wilburn is the co-founder of Wilburn and Associates, LLC, along with his wife Dr. Roberta Wilburn. The consulting business provides diversity training, intervention, and cultural awareness programs. For more information, visit their website at wilburnassociates.org or contact them at wilburnassociatesllc@gmail.com.

LINKS, Inc. and Inland Imaging Host Annual 2020 Mammogram Party

Inland Imaging and the Spokane Chapter of the Links, Inc. invite you to their Annual Mammogram Party!!

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the United States. A 2015 report published by The American Cancer Society, titled “Breast Cancer Facts and Figure” noted that Black women are more likely to die from breast cancer in every age group.

Two of the reasons cited in the report for the higher death rates amongst Black women are that Black women are more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to be diagnosed at later stages of the disease and therefore have the lowest survival at each stage of diagnosis. Black women are also more likely to be diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer, which is an aggressive subtype that is linked to poorer survival.

To combat breast cancer, and detect breast cancer earlier, when treatments are more likely to be successful, the American Cancer Society recommends that women should begin having yearly mammograms by the age of 45. Yet, despite the risk, many African American women do not follow that recommendation.

In an effort to encourage Spokane’s African American women to get mammograms and breast cancer screenings, Inland Imaging has been partnering with the Links, Inc. to offer Mammogram, or “Mam” parties each year.

The annual parties, spearheaded each year by Faith

Washington, a nurse manager at Inland Imaging, started as a part of My Sister’s Temple, which is a non-profit organization that was established in 2008. The “Mam Parties” seek to break down many of the barriers that keep Black women from seeking medical treatment. The atmosphere is relaxing, and much more like a gathering of sisters than a visit to a medical clinic.

About the Mammogram Party:
Join us for a relaxing evening with neighbors and friends. Free refreshments, appetizers, chair massage and give aways. Sneak in your mammogram in a low stress setting.

For: Women over 40 who are due for their routine exam around this time or for those aged 35-40 who wish to be screened.

When: February 25, 2020
5:30 PM – 7:00pm

Where: Inland Imaging, which is located inside of Holy Family Hospital, use the North entrance, we are on the lower level, 5715 N Lidgerwood St, Spokane

What's Needed: Participants will need to provide their Primary Care Dr's name, DOB & Insurance Carrier info.

****IMPORTANT****
You MUST Pre-Register to participate by contacting Faith Washington. Call 509-363-7833, Text 509-999-9728 or e-mail fwashington@inland-imaging.com

Hosted by the Spokane Chapter of the Links, Inc, Faith Washington and Inland Imaging, LLC.



“Without the mammogram my cancer would have gone undetected.”
-Tamela Richards

20/20

Clear Vision

on

Mental Health

Among African-American Men

Engaging Disscussion

with Professional Panelists

Gonzaga University Law School

721 N Cincinnati St, Spokane, WA 99202

February 24th, 2020

5:30-7:30pm

20/20: Clear Vision of Mental Health Among African American Men

Every year, more than 40 million Americans struggle with mental illness. African American men are as likely as anyone else to have mental illness, but they are less likely to get help.

Depression and other mental illness can be deadly if left untreated. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among African Americans 15 to 24 years old. Untreated mental illness can also make African American men more vulnerable to substance abuse, homelessness, incarceration, and homicide.

As a national mandated Health Initiative, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc has partnered with the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) to launch an initiative to help start conversations in relation to mental health among African American men. In hopes to promote educational workshops and informational resources for men of color and their families.

With this effort in mind, the local Omega Psi Phi Fraternity chapter of Chi Alpha Alpha, will hosting a panel discussion that brings together African Americans, mental health professionals, and community members in hopes of fostering a healthy dialogue surrounding mental health in the African American community.

Some of the topics that will be discussed are:

- Social and economic influences
- Accessibility
- Health equity
- Cultural competency of mental health providers
- Stigma surrounding mental health
- A Wellness toolkit
- Information and shared resources available in Spokane, WA

20/20: Clear Vision of Mental Health among African American Men

Monday February 24, 2020

5:30pm - 7:30pm

Gonzaga University Law School Center

721 N Cincinnati St, Spokane, WA 99202

Free event. Open forum for discussion and information sharing!

Spokane Regional Health District Launches African American Health Initiative

This February, Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) is launching the African American Health Initiative to improve the health of African Americans in our community.

Carmen Pacheco-Jones, a health program specialist with SRHD, said, “By addressing the health of our African American community, we can mitigate disparities and inequities that currently exist.”

African Americans in the United States and in Spokane County suffer greater health challenges than most other populations. These differences have been influenced by both past and current discrimination throughout U.S. culture and culture-driven policy.

For example, the rate of diabetes among African Americans is 13.2 percent, compared to 9.6 percent among Whites, and the rate of pre-term births among African Americans is 12.6 percent compared to 8.7 percent among Whites.

These and other differences in health are greatly influenced by policies, practices, procedures, and institutional discrimination that serves the dominant culture at the expense of African American health.



Pacheco-Jones explained that over the past two years, SRHD has engaged the community in focus groups and “listen and learn” sessions, partnered with the NAACP Health Committee, and collaborated with faith-based organizations through the Make Our Churches Healthy campaign. Through these sessions, SRHD identified major health concerns among the African American community, including cardiovascular diseases, behavioral health, and maternal and infant health.

“We are committed to having conversations about health inequities in our community to find collaborative solutions,” Pacheco-Jones said. “These efforts have elevated the voices of the African American community, increased awareness of the factors that influence health beyond individual behaviors and paved the way for us to improve health equity.”

The intent of the African American Health Initiative is to establish a community-driven, coordinated effort to address the prioritized health concerns. Pacheco-Jones explained that the initiative will create opportunities for innovative work that promotes health and well-being in our community and address causes of health inequities.

“Together, we can create social and economic conditions that promote health starting in childhood. We can provide trainings for healthcare professionals to help them understand cultural differences in how patients interact with providers and the healthcare system,” Pacheco-Jones said.

The initiative is financed with local funds and two grants from the Washington State Department of Health (DOH). The grants from DOH fund work that impacts and promotes tobacco and vapor product prevention and cessation efforts as well as HIV



prevention. Cardiovascular diseases are greatly impacted by tobacco usage, so working early to prevent usage and helping individuals stop using tobacco and vapor products can have a great impact on the community.

To learn more about the African American Health Initiative and SRHD’s efforts to find solutions for health inequities in our community, email healthy-communities@srhd.org or call (509) 324-3613.

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Step Back Bobby Jack - A Spokane Documenatary

By Kris McLemore

Spokane Washington is home to many different unique landscapes, people and cultures that make this place so special. Hidden within this town’s legacy we have the honor of having numerous influencers and figures that give Spokane pride. One of those unique figures is Bobby Jack Sumler. Sumler left his mark on Spokane with his gifts and amazing abilities in the game of basketball. This gift earned Sumler the title of local legend in Spokane.

Many people, like Michael Bethely and DaShawn Bedford, have vivid memories of Sumler. Memories of the records he held, stories of his incredible talent and how he gave back to his community. Michael Bethely is the Director of photography and

DaShawn Bedford is the co-producer and editor for an upcoming documentary detailing the story of Bobby Jack Sumler.

With a \$5,000 Grant from Spokane Arts and a \$2,000 Spokane Hoopfest Grant, Bethely and Bedford are creating a documentary in honor of Sumler’s legacy in the Spokane community. The documentary is called *Step Back Bobby Jack*.

Bobby Jack Sumler is a Spokane native who graduated from Lewis & Clark High School in 1979, where he led the league in scoring. Following high school, Sumler played at Spokane Community College from 1985-86. While there, Sumler was a first team Eastern Regional Selection, averaging 17.9 ppg (points per game) at 56% shooting. Sumler had 225 assists while cre-

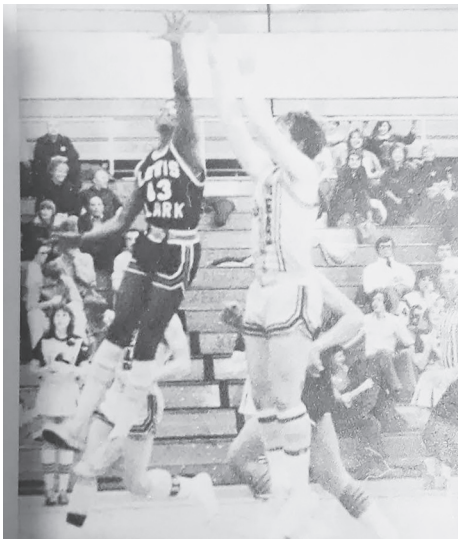
ating a school record for 150 steals in one season, earning him MVP honors.

After his career with Spokane Community College, Sumler went on to be an assistant coach and gave seven years back to his college, helping to develop numerous talented athletes like himself.

Of the local legend, Michael Bethely said, "It's exciting to be able to tell Bobby Jack's story. Not only to highlight his legacy on the court, but also to highlight it off the court. His character and who he is as a person, really translates through the stories that individuals are telling us about him. They all say that he's a nice, humble and caring person. Which I know to be true personally."

Dozens of stories about Sumler’s talented abilities continue to circulate in the Spokane basketball community. Bethely recounted stories of Sumler shooting half court shots effortlessly and being able to dunk with no restrictions, even in combat boots. Sumler gave back to his community by holding “Step Back Bobby Jack” camps. The camps were provided for underprivileged youth in the Spokane community for years.

DaShawn Bedford had this to say in regard to Sumler and the documentary, "I want to do this documentary to let people know that Bobby Jack is one of the great-



est players in Spokane to play the game of basketball. What we hope to accomplish is to tell a story of a great person and hopefully somebody can learn something from what he may have gone through. For the high school kids, we want to give them the experience of what it takes to be a part of a production and to see if this is the route they really want to take for their career, and if so how hard you have to work."

The community is encouraged to share personal stories about Bobby Jack Sumler by visiting the stepbackbobbyjack.com website.

Kris McLemore is a student at Eastern Washington University and is a Black Lens intern.





Washington State Commission On

African American Affairs

Comments from Your Commissioner

Greetings all,
I pray this communicate finds you in good health, brimming with happiness, and enjoying prosperity, both physical and spiritual.

Since last I wrote to you with the intent of keeping you abreast of the events taking place with the State of Washington Commission on African American Affairs, the Holiday season 2019 has faded into our memories and a New Year has begun.

In November 2019 the Commission met in Renton Washington, and I was present, representing you and your concerns. One topic of great interest for not only myself but the Commission as a whole, presented by the Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises, was the State of Washington 2019 Disparity Study. A disparity study is an analysis that examines the number of specified individuals or groups who are available to obtain State of Washington contracts, and those who are selected {utilized}.

This study revealed what many African Americans in this State are aware of, we are being severely short-changed concerning the awarding of tax dollars to businesses of color regarding State contracts. The complete study can be read, with detailed explanations given at: fiscal.wa.gov/OMWBE. If you have any questions concerning this study please get in touch with me at 509-534-4878.

On Thursday January 9, 2020 the Commission held its first meeting of the year in Olympia. Two new Commissioners were seated, replacing 2 others who had termed out. One of the Commissioners terming out had been representing the Tri- Cities region of the state. A variety of reasons prevented another representative from being selected from the Tri-Cities. I now am the lone representative for the Eastern part of the state.

I have been active here in Spokane assisting those who have been facing workplace issues, those who are having difficulty interacting with various governmental agencies, and those wrestling with the legal system, be the issue law en-



forcement or the Courts. I will continue, with the support of the Commission as a whole, to be available to assist those having issues with any of these entities. I also attended many events here in the region celebrating the mission, life and legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the Month of January.

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled to be held in our city, Spokane, on **Saturday, March 14th, 2020, 11am until 2pm**. The venue, as of this writing, has yet to be determined. Be assured as soon as the venue is determined you shall be notified.

As the Month of February draws nigh, and with its arrival the National celebration of Black History, let us reflect upon someone from our past who sacrificed themselves to put us in a position to be able to vote, gather, establish residence, work, travel, and participate in all the activities being a Citizen of this country provides without fear. We are grateful to and for our Forefathers and Mothers, upon whose shoulders we stand. Until next time, take care of yourselves, take care of one another, and watch out for one another.

See you somewhere out in our community.

Walter Kendricks
*Pastor, Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church
Eastern Washington Representative, Washington State Commission on African American Affairs*

BIG CHANGES

are coming to

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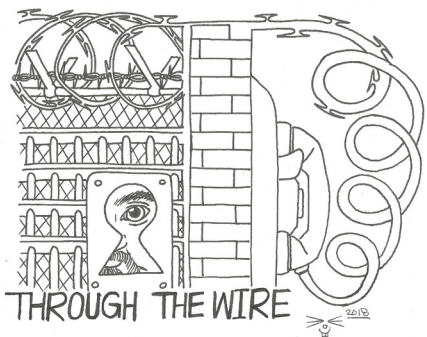
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Please take an online survey open from February 3-24

SpokaneTransit.com/Survey



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How Can We Rest?

By Derek “TheRealDream” Wilson

When most of the time
what's holding our people down /it be our own selves
we always seem like we have something to prove
something to reclaim
something to take back like there's something to gain
something was stolen from us
How do I know?
Because we quick to be at war with one another ...
with someone who look like us
shoot me n the back
but run from the police
no need to wonder why
Rosa chose to sit at the front of the bus
so let us
not be at war with one another
rather uplift and heal one another, be real to one another
for the sake of our sisters and brothers and kinfolk
who came before us

How Can We Rest
when every time it's another black on black crime in the city of rain
guess who is sitting back laughing, teaching their children
the truth of how to properly gain and sustain
just look around; tell me what you see
do you see the 400 years of pain?
Buried deep inside of my mother's eyes
hardened from centuries of systematic power, of illicit money, and white lies
or are you blind?

Sleep walkin' n these troubled times

How Can We Rest
when every time we go to pay our rent
we wonder how long will it be?
Until our landlord is for surely upping the fee
so we trapped
in what now is gentrification
because too many of the families in my jurisdiction
are living with these circumstances
feeling hopeless for a shot at what the world calls success
so we take our chances ... at a life that we know best.

How Can We Rest
when it's that mentality of going back to what we know best
keeps on tearing us down and everything in our path
it's like
every time we try an up and leave
something keeps on pulling us back
holding us down like we're under attack
leaving our lil' black babies to mourn, and fend for themselves
because mommy and daddy couldn't get out of the way of oneself

How Can We Rest
when we young
and see the tears in our mothers eyes
from broken promises and bold lies
from the father who swore ...he said he'll never leave our side
but we don't need no definition of disappear
to understand he ain't never here

How Can We Rest
when we
begin to live for one another
instead of oneself

Do You Have Debt From Criminal Convictions in Municipal, District or Superior Courts in Spokane County?



Sign Up for I Did The Time's Legal Financial Obligations (LFO) Reconsideration Day

Coming April 17th, 2020!

Due to the passing of HB1783 in the summer of 2018, individuals with LFOs can now apply to waive past interest on *non-restitution debt and other eligible court fees and fines! If you have debt from criminal convictions in municipal, district or superior courts in Spokane County, you are eligible to apply!

Our Judges and County Clerk have graciously opened a day to help those who have been burdened by this crushing form of debt to relieve as much as possible. Thousands of dollars will be waived!

Please sign up at this link **before February 29th**: <https://forms.gle/fN8eYGeb9g89rSVe7> or go to I Did the Time's Facebook Event, LFO Reconsideration Day to find the link electronically: <https://www.facebook.com/events/772089323255338> or email ididthetime@gmail.com for information.



Dennis Cronin
Attorney at Law P.S.

509-328-5600



OUR VOICES

5 Phrases Your Black Friend Wishes You'd Stop Saying

By Ajah Hales

Statistically speaking, about 75% of White people don't even have a Black friend, but on the off chance that you are one of the White people who do, I have a message for you from your (one) Black friend: Do better.

In her New York Times bestselling book *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, author Robin DiAngelo writes, "White progressives ... so often — despite our conscious intentions — make life so difficult for people of color. I believe that white progressives cause the most daily damage to people of color."

This is in part because White progressives have the most consistent access and adjacency to people of the global majority. You are our bosses, co-workers, in-laws, and friends. You love us, and we love you, but your lack of self-awareness makes you dangerous, like a blindfolded elephant mindlessly swinging its trunk, leaving destruction in your wake.

The supreme irony of cross-racial friendships is that the more I care about you, the less inclined I am to point out the racist impact of your words or actions. It's easy to tell a Donald Trump supporter that Blackness is not a monolith and their use of racially charged stereotypes is harmful, but it's harder to explain to my best friend from college why saying "you're not really Black" isn't a compliment.

I've made it a personal goal to stop wasting my breath on calling out my enemies (they're not listening anyway) and to instead invest more time and energy into calling in my friends and allies. I think that only by holding each other accountable for the privileged identities we carry can we move forward into a society where those identities no longer predict life outcomes for the marginalized.

It's in this spirit of partnership and progress that I offer this short but crucial list of phrases your Black friend wishes you would stop saying (but probably won't tell you about). In no particular order:

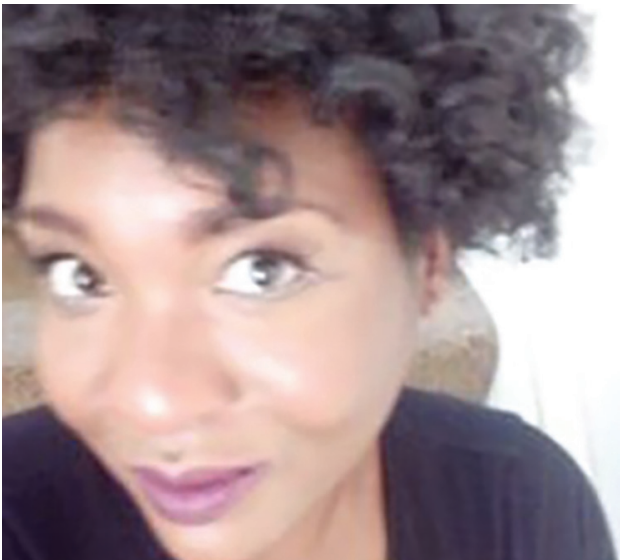
1. "You're so strong!"

While on the surface this may seem like a compliment, it's really not. For many Black women, "strength" has an automatic association with silent suffering and the dehumanization that accompanies emotional denial.

The "strong Black woman" archetype is based on centuries of pseudo-scientific experimentation on Black women that contributes to modern-day racial bias in physical pain management. But the stereotype has bled out of the medical world and into society at large, where it's widely believed that Black women simply don't feel physical or emotional pain the same way their White counterparts do. This dangerous assumption and the callous treatment that grows out of it has led many Black women to embody the "superwoman" stereotype to the detriment of our mental, physical, and emotional health.

This belief system has become ingrained in the minds of Black women as well. This stereotype has kept Black women from expressing themselves and being believed and respected in their self-expression. By reinforcing the Black superwoman schema, you are essentially telling your friend: "I'm okay with a system that dehumanizes you and calls it strength."

If you want to be supportive and encouraging, try supporting your friend's right to be a whole Black woman instead of a "strong" one. As Taraji P. Henson recently told Patia Braithwaite in *Self* magazine: "I'm a whole Black woman, whatever comes with that. All the emotions, all of the rage,



the anger, the love, the hurt, the hope, the despair, the strength, the vulnerability. I'm all of that."

2. "You're so articulate!"

I can't count the number of times people have told me this. Even though I was born in the United States, speak two languages fluently, and was a statewide speech and debate champion in high school, somehow it still surprises folks that I speak English well and use multisyllabic words.

This statement signals a longstanding tradition of using language to reinforce racial hierarchy. In 1851, Sojourner Truth gave her now-famous "Ain't I a Woman?" speech at the National Women's Rights Convention held in Akron, Ohio. Truth, an upstate New Yorker who spoke English and Dutch fluently, delivered her soliloquy in the same colonial English that White female suffragettes used, but the version of her words we all learned growing up were actually penned by White feminist Frances Gage 12 years after Truth delivered her speech. Gage's version is riddled with "slave speech" that discredited the validity of Truth's words and reinforced the attitude that White feminist audiences already had toward their darker-skinned counterparts.

In the same way, calling your Black friend "articulate" today reinforces the idea that White people have the right to define what it means to be well-spoken and that the only way to be truly eloquent is to mimic the speaking patterns of people of Western European descent.

3. "I wish I could wear/get away with/style my hair like that."

Mainly, you should stop saying this because it's not true. It's 2020. Any hairstyle you can fathom is just a lace front and a dream away, and Lord knows there's no shortage of White women appropriating Black culture, fashion, and even complexion.

The key to understanding the racist impact of this phrase is unpacking the spoken or implied "get away with" part of the statement. At worst, you're saying that Black cultural expression is something to be "gotten away with," i.e., something inherently bad or wrong. At best, you're admitting that if there were no social consequences for White cultural appropriation of Black style, you would gladly participate in it. Your Black friend understands this dichotomy even if you aren't fully conscious of it yet.

4. "You're not really Black."

When I was younger and deeply ensconced in "talented

tenth" mentality, I used to consider this a compliment. After all, I knew what people meant by it: I was well-spoken, intelligent, cultured, respectable. I was all of the things their limited interactions with Blackness taught them most people who looked like me were not.

Every metric my White friends have ever used to measure my Blackness is rooted in false stereotypes. There is nothing exceptional about a Black woman who reads or listens to John Mayer or excels at chemistry or likes beach vacations. Your Black friend enjoying the same activities as you doesn't make her less Black, but your thinking it does makes you less cultured.

Americans, whether Black or White, have a toxic relationship with race, privilege, and power, and that relationship is sustained in large part by collective denial and willful ignorance.

5. "I can't believe it."

This kind of statement is insidiously harmful because it assumes White ignorance is the equivalent of racial innocence. Robin DiAngelo said it best on a recent episode of Layla Saad's *Good Ancestor* podcast: "White people are not innocent on race. I think it's a kind of willful refusal to see or to know because people of color, you've been telling us forever."

An unarmed Black child is murdered by the police? You can't believe it. The president fills his Cabinet with White supremacists? You can't believe it. A 16-year-old White girl plots to murder a church full of Black parishioners? You just can't believe it!

I'll admit, the election of Trump came as a shock to me, not because of what I knew of this country, but because of what I wanted and needed to believe about my country. I understand how hard it can be to admit to oneself the relationship you're emotionally invested in is actually toxic and abusive, but I also understand that denial helps to keep us in toxic and abusive situations.

Americans, whether Black or White, have a toxic relationship with race, privilege, and power, and that relationship is sustained in large part by collective denial and willful ignorance.

The next time you're tempted to say you "can't believe" something, ask yourself: Why can't I believe it? Has this happened before? Is this a daily experience for people with a different skin tone, religious background, or ethnicity from me? How does this information contradict what I want to believe about my country? What does it mean for me as a White person to be ignorant about this?

Then take the next step: Google it. White people are often incredulous about things you could easily Google, but instead of looking it up, you expect your Black friends to do the uncompensated labor of explaining their lived experience in a way that you can understand. Not cool, White friend, not cool.

Simply eliminating these phrases from your speech won't make you "more woke," won't eradicate racial wealth or health disparities, and won't save us from four more years of Trump and his supporters. What it will do is show your Black friend(s) that you want to do better, that you're trying to minimize your racist impact, and that you take responsibility for being a better friend and ally, and in the immortal words of Nina Simone, that's all I ask.

Ajah Hales is a writer, social thinker and small business owner from Cleveland, Ohio. To read more of her writing visit: <https://medium.com/@ajahhales>



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OUR VOICES

2020 - The Erosion of Democracy

By **Curtis Hampton** (*Spokane*)

America, with all its previous greatness is gradually becoming the land of lawlessness. We have allowed gangsterism to become the norm in this land which, once upon a time, was the symbol of global respect, admiration and greatness. The blame dial can easily be directed toward Trump, Mitch McConnell, the GOP and Attorney General William Barr. But did this begin with the before mentioned individuals or did we as proud Americans, just fall asleep at the wheel and allow this erosion?

Maybe it's as simple as Truth, Justice and The American Way deteriorating to the theory of "hear no evil, see no evil."

I would argue that this erosion goes back much further than the MAGA slogan. When was America ever so great that she could rest on her laurels and say that her job was all done?

When President Reagan used the slogan "Let's make America great again" in 1980, what era was he referring to? Let's not forget that Bill Clinton also used the phrase in 1992. Do we know the era that he was referring to? Was it when America belonged to the Native Americans or was it when America waged war on Mexico to take their land? Or was it when Slavery was abolished and Slavery was reformulated as Mass Incarceration?

Since the inauguration of Trump, we have tolerated Russian interference into our elections with no retribution or any indication that we have been violated. We have allowed this corrupt administration (AG Bill Barr) to manipulate the Mueller report down to a "nothing to see here" report. We have had the experience of watching the evangelical community be silent on the many moral atrocities that this president has committed. In short, we are embracing a wannabe dictator by the name of Trump.



As Americans, we are in the process of celebrating the New Year, 2020. For me, this celebration should be viewed with laser focus. In the last three years, under Trumpism, America has seen its respect capital plummet to lows never seen before. This President, this GOP, and America have condoned:

- Children being separated from their families
- "Very fine people on both sides" (Charlottesville)
- Still no release of Trump's tax returns
- Putin and Trump talking without chaperones
- Firing of FBI Director James Comey
- Trump's declaration of war on Black athletes
- Trump throwing paper towels at Puerto Ricans

- Consistent, almost countless, lies from the President
- The UN General Assembly laughing at the President of the United States
- Misuse of charity funds
- A \$25 million fraud case involving Trump University
- Paul Manafort, campaign manager - convicted
- Michael Cohen, lawyer and fixer - convicted
- Michael Flynn, Nation Security Advisor – convicted
- Rick Gates, litany of offenses – filing false tax returns, setting up shell companies to hide foreign income

Does this person or this party represent the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave? Wake up America! It's time to reclaim our pride and see this dark Trump chapter as an opportunity for America to be what we profess to be.

As an African American who is also a Vietnam Vet, I see America as a dysfunctional parent who not only needs our courage, but now, more than ever, is begging for our guidance. It has been said that elections have consequences; in fact we are living in the wake of those consequences. These consequences are lawlessness that each of us confronts on a daily basis in the current Trump-GOP administration.

It's time to wake up and force America and its politicians to live up to the oath that they all took but seem to have forgotten. We have allowed America to sleep walk to sub-par levels and it's totally unacceptable for the destiny of a great country.

Curtis Hampton is a retired Vietnam Era Veteran and a retired Aerospace Operations Manager. He currently serves on the board of The Carl Maxey Center, is co-chair of Smart Justice Spokane, is on the Steering Committee for the SRLJC Racial Equity Committee and (SCAR) Spokane Community Against Racism, a member of the NAACP and a registered volunteer in Spokane Public Schools.

We Must Never Surrender Our Culture

By **Dr. Conrad W. Worrill**

(BlackCommentator.com) Our late, great ancestor, Dr. Asa G. Hilliard's book, *The Maroon Within Us*, once again reminds us of a major problem that we, as African people in America, are besieged by. Dr. Hilliard described this problem as cultural surrender.

In explaining the problem, Dr. Hilliard wrote, "African Americans remain one of the very few groups in the United States who do not honor their own cultural traditions, sometimes even when they are honored by others."

Continuing on this point, Dr. Hilliard states that, "If there is a major illness among African American people it is that we unceasingly honor and utilize our culture less. All great nations and people do the opposite."

As Dr. Hilliard further explains, "Cultural surrender is more than a matter of rejecting one's father and mother culture. It means that one accepts a new definition as a person. The culturally dependent person is a mere spectator, a receptacle for the creativities of others. To demand freedom from slavery only to use that freedom to commit one's self to a voluntary cultural servitude is to lose the chance to be human."

The erosion of many of our African cultural traditions and foundations are most evidenced in our family and community life. Far too many African people in America are getting away from the essence of family life. The cultural tradition of African family life is that of the extended family that centers itself on the rearing of children and caring for the elders.

Family life is the basis for which a people maintain their cultural traditions, traditions that are important to the survival of a people. The way we raise our children in the context of extended family life for African people was always connected to the overall development of the larger community.

Dr. Hilliard writes, "There have always been Africans or Black people in America who have been both physically and mentally free. We have also had far too many of those who have yielded their bodies—and worse, their souls—to people and systems whose purpose was to exploit to take all and give nothing."



It is in this context that Dr. Hilliard provides several reasons why this devastating trend of cultural surrender is taking place. He says, "...we have tended to accept certain false dichotomies," such as the following:

We have tended to equate sophisticated technology with culture, believing that such technology is exclusively European and that to affirm African culture is to reject technology.

We have tended to equate modern with technology, and to value modern as if it were cultural progress. At the same time, we have seen the affirmation of African/African American culture as a matter of retrogression. Further, we have seen African/African American culture as static rather than dynamic and adaptive.

We have tended to equate European culture with wealth and African/African American culture with poverty.

We have tended to associate education with the acquisition of all the cultural forms of Europeans, and find it hard to conceive of educated persons who live the African/African American culture.

We have tended to equate self-affirmation with the hatred of others.

We have tended to equate religion with particular forms of European interpretations of Christianity and have not seen our people as religious or spiritual.

Generally we have failed to study ourselves and to know our culture.

The challenges that African people face in America, and throughout the world, as we enter the twenty-first-century is to create programs, strategies, and institutions that will reclaim and preserve our rich culture.

One such program that has emerged as one approach to preserving our culture and traditions aimed at our youth is the growing Rites of Passage Movement. This Movement seeks to place African and African people at the center of independently working with our young people.

Children in Rites of Passage Programs are generally taught aspects of our history that included our literary accomplishments, our accomplishments in music, science and technology, and the spiritual concepts of African people that direct our moral and ethical behavior and treatment of others.

As we look out and observe the African World Community, we can see a common set of problems that all African people face, as a result of hundreds of years of exploitation by Europeans and others against African people. This exploitation has developed into a worldwide system of white supremacy and white domination aimed at wiping out African culture. We must resist and refuse any efforts to wipe out our culture.

Finally, Dr. Hilliard writes, "Cultural surrender or cultural destruction leads inevitably to the loss of any possibility for a group to mobilize on its behalf. There can be no African/African American family in the absence of a cultural base."

Conrad W. Worrill, PhD is the National Chairman Emeritus of the National Black United Front (NBUF) as well as a BlackCommentator.com Columnist. Visit: drconradworrill.com for more information.

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Join the Black Lens as we Celebrate Our 5th Year in Print.

Anniversary Celebration

Tuesday, February 11
6-8pm

The Gathering House
733 W Garland Ave,
Spokane

Stop by for a minute to say hi or stay
the whole time. Hope to see you there.
Thank you Spokane.

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