

Election 2020

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October 2020

www.blacklensnews.com

Vol. 6 Issue No. 10

Spokane's Black Community News Source



A Letter From Spokane's Black Clergy

To Spokane's White Clergy in Response to a Request for Forgiveness



(September 25, 2020 - Spokane, WA) We stand together here today acknowledging the desire of our White brethren to make a public confession and repentance to the Black Pastors of this city for failing to stand alongside of us in the fight against systemic racism and racial injustice in this City, State, and Nation.

We stand acknowledging that the planners of this event may have planned this event with good intentions. However, by failing to consult or consider the impact that it may have on the community most affected by racial injustice and police brutality, this event is in itself yet another act of cultural insensitivity and white superiority.

We, the Black clergy and faith leaders from the Black community stand to call into question the authenticity of your repentance. Scripture records John the Baptist questioning the confession of the Pharisees, then recommending they examine their own hearts and "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance" {Matthew 3:8}

We, the Black clergy of Spokane Washington have circled this wagon of reconciliation for many years and many planned events. We have joined our White Brothers and Sisters of faith on platforms and stages, in arenas, and in several churches, to make public confessions and

sign covenants together in agreement that racism is sin and that it should not be tolerated nor allowed to sit comfortably within the pews of the Christian church. We have prayed together, broke bread together, marched together on MLK day, and road on buses together to Promise Keepers events. Despite all of this, we have observed many of our White Brothers and Sisters return to their pulpits forgetting to keep the promise.

We have witnessed historically this racial complicity as far back as "Mission Spokane", where the rightful succession of an African American pastor into the role of President was denied by white pastors who were clearly uncomfortable with having a Black leader. We continue to witness practices of tokenism and utilizing gifted Black Christians to symbolize diversity and equality with no real pathway towards executive leadership, as well as unethical and self-serving efforts to undermine the mission of Black-led initiatives, while attempting to claim them as your own visions and ideas.

Our history is littered with stolen rights- from our homeland to a strange land, from being a man, to being told you are only 3/5ths of a man. From slavery to chattel. From running for freedom to freedom riders. From a document that declared us free, to a Jim Crow that locked us up

and threw away the key. From civil rights to voting rights. From housing rights to educational rights. From the right to sit anywhere we choose on a bus, and then you cringe when we shine the light on what's happening to "Just Us".

From laws of discrimination that lead to mass incarceration. From a war on drugs which you used to label us as "Thugs". We watch as you then legalize and capitalize off of the very thing you once criticized. From historical lynchings and backlash whippings, to the domestic terrorism of Tulsa and Greenwood and Rosewood. From white hoods to blue hoods, to then have the audacity to tell us that we are from the hood!

Legalized lynchings. Street executions. Black lives minimized, shot dead, then dehumanized. Criminalized by and in the media, by a past that has nothing to do with the present act. From the hoodies of Travon Martin, to the "I Can't Breathe" of Eric Garner. From the 6 shots until I drop of Michael Brown, to the 16 shots - 3 while standing and 13 on the ground of Laquan McDonald, I can still hear the sound. From Tamir Rice, wait it's just a toy, only 2 seconds, I'm just a 12-year-old boy. From Walter Scott, shot cold in the back, to Freddie Gray, what a day, what I thought was a Paddy wagon transformed into my hearse. From Sandra Bland's mysterious jail house lynching, to Alton Sterling - he

shouldn't have been reaching. From Philando Castile and you say we just need to comply, to Botham Jean's mother, I still just want to know why. From Elijah McClain's own cry - "I'm just special, I don't hurt anyone", to "I can't breathe, Officer are you done?" From Atatiana Jefferson playing a video game in her own bedroom, to Ahmaud Arbury - you mean I can't even jog while being Black. Breonna Taylor - You think that's something. Have you ever gone to bed in "Peace" and woke up to "Still No Justice?"

And now here we are, 8 minutes later, and you still got your knee on our necks - George Floyd. "We Still Can't Breathe" When does it stop? As Ben Franklin once stated, "Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are".

Therefore, we the Black clergy of Spokane, Washington pen this letter, not only to the White Clergy of our city, but to all those who are reading this, whatever the location. We say, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. penned in his letter from the Birmingham County Jail to the white clergy of his time: "In the end it will not be the words of our enemy that we will remember, but the silence of our friends".

You say you are "Beyond Words". Then we say, we are Beyond Talk - We want action!



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ON MY MIND

THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

by Sandra Williams



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

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Subscriptions: Delivered monthly by mail - \$45/year

Submission/Advertising Deadline: 15th of the month

Website: www.blacklensnews.com

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YOU SHOULD KNOW

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

ART AND HISTORY by Bertoni Jones Bey

James Marion Sims

On April 17th, 2018 a statue of Dr. James Marion Sims, hailed the “Father of Modern Gynecology” and founder of the first women’s hospital, was removed from New York’s Central Park. It became another casualty in an era where monuments of the past are under assault. Some questioned the removal of this monument others desired to see it come down years ago, but for what reason?

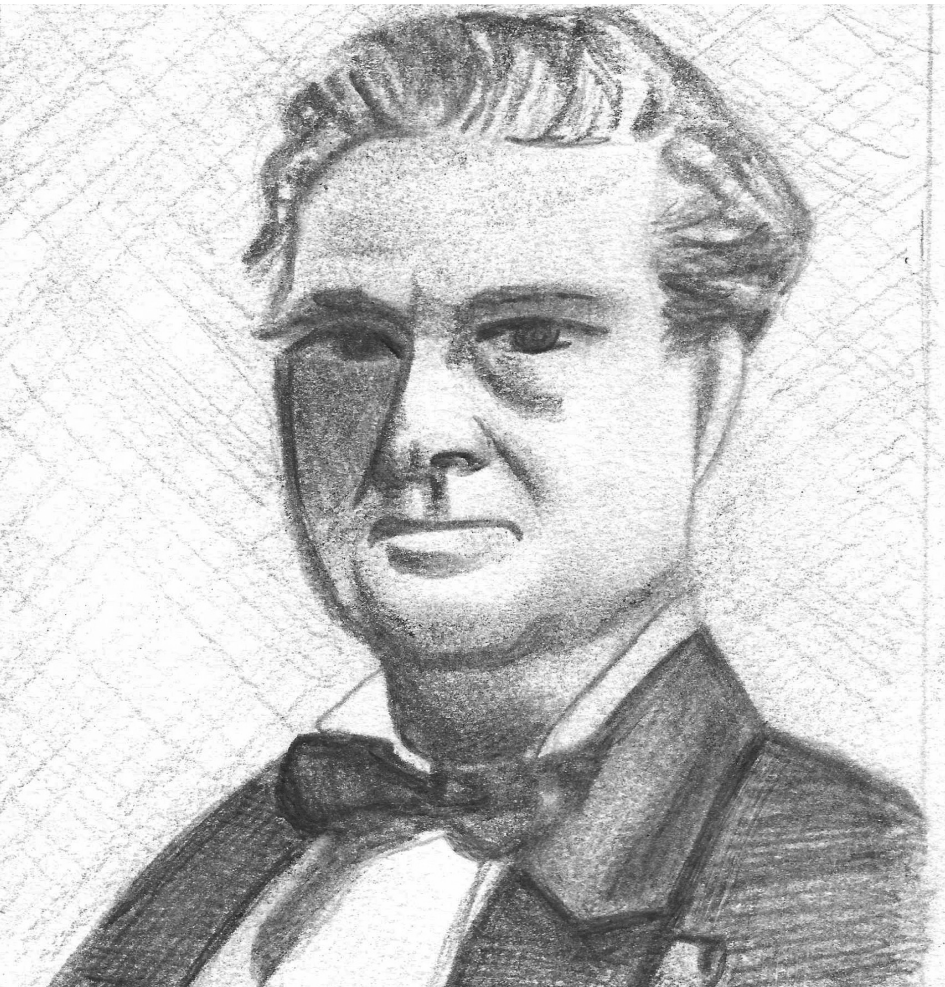
James Marion Sims (1813-1883) was born in Hanging Rock, South Carolina. He trained in medicine in South Carolina and Philadelphia acknowledging his lack of skill as a student: “When it came time to making up a prescription, I had no more idea of what to do than if I had never studied medicine.” Those feelings of incompetence vanished once he went to work on Southern plantations. He began “treating” neonatal tetanus (bacterial infection caused in an unhealed umbilical stump by unsterilized tools and unsanitary surroundings).

He began “treating” neonatal tetanus (bacterial infection caused in an unhealed umbilical stump by unsterilized tools and unsanitary surroundings). He blamed poverty, laziness, and filthy living conditions for the cause of tetanus without actually attributing it to plantation life. Later while treating tetany (a children’s neuromuscular disease) he blamed skull bone displacement in infants without considering severe lack of magnesium, calcium, and vitamin D caused by malnutrition on plantations as the real culprit. So using only slave babies, Dr. Sims punctured their scalps, and “cobbled” their bones back together believing that their skulls grew quicker than Caucasians.

With zero experience, his gynecological efforts started in 1845 in Alabama when a pregnant seventeen-year old slave girl, Anarcha, suffered terrible labor pain for days. Admitting little experience with forceps, Dr. Sims saved Anarcha but not her child. Sims’ procedure left her torn with gaps, erosions, incontinence from uncontrolled urine flow, and severe and painful infections called a vesicovaginal fistula – a devastating condition for women physically and socially. In her four years with Dr. Sims, Anarcha endured thirty surgeries.

Dr. Sims saw his chance for fame and fortune here by acquiring eleven slave women and a glorified stable as a lab where he allowed non-medical spectators to view his procedures. For four years as guinea-pigs with no patient consent and under heavy doses of highly addictive morphine, these women were positioned on their hands and knees for hours (called the Sims position) and forced with a speculum that he invented into humiliating and painful procedures – “I saw everything as no man had seen before.”

Dr. Sims never used anesthesia on any slave women whose sufferings “were not painful enough to justify the trouble and risk attending the administration”, holding to another myth that dark-skinned people didn’t feel pain as others. He sutured the tears closed, only to see them painfully reopen and re-infected every time. Local doctors forcefully held the women down but after a year most could no longer take the horror or shrieks of the women and they quit, forcing the women to take turns holding each other down.



By using “silver sutures”, Dr. Sims eventually eliminated the ravages of bacteria in the women and brought healing. He became a celebrity in America and Europe touring and giving gynecological speeches and essays as in The American Journal of Medicine in 1852. All of his medical pamphlets featured the images of Caucasian women, never the images of his subjects.

Without the slave system Dr. Sims would never have had access to non-consenting subjects whom he indifferently brutalized. Behind many of the memorials to Cauca-

sian “heroes” there are countless people like Lucy, Dinah, and Anarcha, whose bodies became fodder for Dr. Sims to stand upon in personal glory and whose stories have not been told.

Should the monument of Dr. James Marion Sims have been taken down or left to remain? The question that some are asking is why was it ever cast in fire in the first place?

Sources: Medical Apartheid (Chapter 2) – Harriet A. Washington; time.com/5243443/nyc-statue-marion-sims; embryo.asu.edu/pages/ja-marion-simss-treatment-vesico-vaginal-fistula

9 Black Women Running for WA State Office

Propelled by the support of the newly established Opportunity PAC, nine Black women are making history by running for State Senate and House seats this election cycle. As it now stands, there are only two Black women in the Washington State House and none in the State Senate. If all nine candidates are victorious, they will triple the number of Black women in Washington’s State Legislature and add a Black Senator for the first time in 10 years.

The nine candidates making history are T’wina Nobles, President and CEO of the Tacoma Urban League, who is running for State Senate; Tanisha Harris, District 17, who won her primary with 47% of the vote; Joy Stanford, District 26, who won 44% of the vote; Jamila Taylor of District 30; Kirsten Harris-Talley of District 37; Shirley Sutton of District 32; and April Berg of District 44, who are all running for House seats.

In a world demanding justice, Opportunity PAC’s vision is to have an American democracy that is truly representative by getting Black women elected to public office. They seek to provide financial and networking supports to the campaigns of Black women to ensure that more caring voices are part of critical policy decisions at all levels of government.

Shasti Conrad, Co-founder and Chair of Opportunity PAC, served President Barack Obama as a senior staff



assistant in the White House and Josie Olsen, who has managed compliance operations for dozens of local and state campaigns in Washington and California, comprise the leadership team. The board contains several high-profile, politically minded women, such as Michele Dotson,

State Senator Mona Das (47th LD), State Senator Rebecca Saldana (37th) LD, Shukri Olow, Dawn Bennett and Erin Jones.

“Opportunity PAC has provided a network for these Black women running for office across our state, many who did not know each other prior to its founding, said State Senator Mona Das (D-LD 47), who had the initial idea to start the fundraising effort. “It’s helped elevate and bring awareness to all their campaigns and has really taken on a life of its own, more than I could have ever dreamed. These candidates are now supporting each other, and getting donations and volunteers from around the state.”

We need change agents in Washington State who understand, through first-hand lived experience, that our institutions of government are not working for and have disproportionately left Black, brown, and low-income folks behind. “Our aim, in founding Opportunity PAC, is to give people a chance to turn their awareness of and frustration with systemic racism into action,” said board member Michele Dotson. “Supporting these Black women in their candidacy is a concrete action anyone can take to support a truly representative democracy.”

Sources: Opportunity PAC Website - <https://www.opportunity-pac.com>; Seattle Medium - <http://seattlemedium.com/new-pac-looks-to-help-change-political-landscape-by-supporting-women-of-color>.

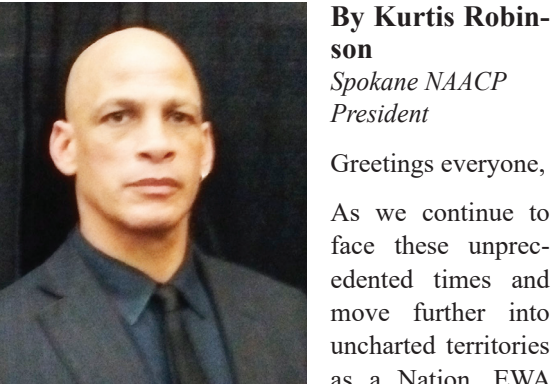
NAACP UPDATE:

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http://www.SpokaneNAACP.com



By Kurtis Robinson
Spokane NAACP President

Greetings everyone,
As we continue to face these unprecedented times and move further into uncharted territories as a Nation, EWA

community an NAACP family, I thought I would take a moment to share some thoughts with you.

Having had the honor to be your local branch president for these last three years, I’ve had to face some things that I would have never dreamed of and bluntly, would have never wanted to face otherwise. Issues like the resurgence of overt racism, the dogmatic structural and individual protectionism of implicit bias, increasing disproportional and disparate treatment of our communities of color across all spectrums of our society, combined with the storms of this pandemic, massive wildfires, and human loss on an almost unforeseen scale.

It has most certainly been an incredible experience of hurricane proportions and remarkably enough the tidal wave is still rolling. Our organization is moving into its own elections as well as dealing with our nation’s elections, of which the importance can never be underscored enough.

As I pondered these few things, reflected back on the loss of my mother and dear friend and brother, as well as contemplating the losses that so many oth-

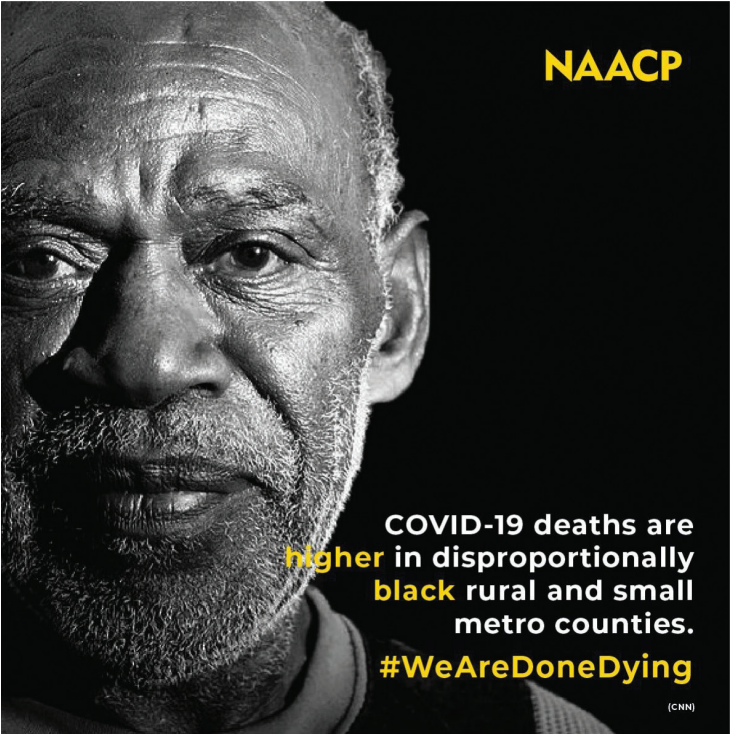
ers have experienced, I cannot help but land on this perspective: We have been here dealing with this for over 400 years. None of us got here by accident and we will not transform any of these challenges into something better by accident either. Our nation and all of our human family is getting a stark, unavoidable invitation to be better than we have been.

We are getting the opportunity to not waste the historic tragedies, their current iterations and the ones that are obviously still coming. From where I view, all of these issues are interconnected, overlapping, highly intersectional, and absolutely interrelated. It’s going to take some very real understanding, flexibility, love and determination to overcome the momentum that has gotten us here. We will need to do so together, all the while challenging our agreements and pay offs for the very thing we are postulating to change.

I have been faced with those choice points over and over again, and every time I’ve had the extreme pleasure of accepting the internal challenge that came along with the external manifestations. I believe that is an invitation open for all of us if we are going to successfully move system change and this American reality closer to the best expression of all of us, instead of the worst manifestations of some of us.

As your Spokane NAACP branch president, I am dedicated to these kinds of principles and more, and will continue in striving to move this organization forward to its next necessary iteration for the benefit of those we serve.

With love and appreciation for all of you.



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08/29/2020

Spokane Food Fighters distributes 350 boxes on final day

"When the pandemic hit, Riccelli needed to do something to help. 'Spokane Food Fighters started with this idea that we're in a COVID time and there's people struggling out there and we wanted to do something,' said Riccelli. 'We didn't know if we were going to be delivering five meals or 25 meals.' It ended up being 120,000 meals, thanks to community partners, restaurants, and volunteers."

Re-Elect

Marcus Riccelli

State Representative | D | 3rd LD



Marcus and his wife Amanda grew up here and are choosing to raise their family in Spokane. They're committed to creating a Spokane where every kid can thrive, regardless of the zip code they were born in.

Marcus is a North Spokane YMCA Advisory Board member and coaches youth soccer.

Learn more at MarcusRiccelli.com | [f/Marcus Riccelli](https://facebook.com/MarcusRiccelli) | [@MarcusRiccelli](https://twitter.com/MarcusRiccelli)

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BLACK NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Local, State, National and Around the World

Detroit Students Sue for Literacy and Win

Following a historic lawsuit brought by seven Black students, the state of Michigan will put more than \$94 million into a state-wide literacy campaign for public schools.

(Source: N. Jamiyla Chisolm, <https://www.colorlines.com/articles>)

Detroit, MI — “The hard-fought, four-year Gary B. literacy case, in which seven Black students in Detroit sued the state of Michigan in 2016 to improve the school system and literacy access, was settled on May 14 in favor of the students, Governor Gretchen Whitmer’s office announced. In the complaint, students shared a laundry list of educational and literacy issues in the public schools, such as predominantly having books with pictures instead of words in primary school when students are first taught to read.

The landmark settlement means that \$94.4 million will support literacy-related programs and initiatives throughout the Detroit Public School Community District (DPSCD), for which Whitmer will propose legislation during her first term and the seven students will share a \$280,000 payout. The governor will also create two Detroit-based task forces: The Detroit Literacy Equity Task Force will include students, parents, literacy experts, teachers, paraprofessionals and community leaders to conduct annual literacy evaluations and policy recommendations; and the Detroit Educational Policy Committee will focus on the educational ecosystem in Detroit as a whole.

“Today, I’m overwhelmed with joy for the opportunities this settlement opens up for students in Detroit,” Jamarria Hall, a 2017 graduate of Osborn High School and part of the class of plaintiffs in Gary B. v. Whitmer, said in a joint press statement with the governor. “Starting this journey four years ago parents and students knew we wanted a better education, and now to really be heard for the first time means everything.”

“I have always said that every student, no matter where they come from, has a birthright to a quality public education,” said Whitmer. “Students in Detroit faced obstacles to their



education that inhibited their ability to read—obstacles they never should have faced. In the future, I will remain committed to ensuring paths to literacy for children across Michigan. Today’s settlement is a good start, but there’s more work to do to create paths to opportunity for our children.”

Part of that guidance will also come from evidence-based literacy strategies, which the governor has tasked the Michigan Department of Education to teach school districts how to use and to focus on reducing class, racial, and ethnic disparities.

“This is what the force of history looks like. Almost 66 years to the day that Brown v. Board of Education was decided, the Detroit community and Governor Whitmer forged a historic settlement recognizing the constitutional right of access to literacy,” said Mark Rosenbaum, director of Public Counsel Opportunity Under Law.

“While there is much work left to be done, today’s settlement paves the way for the State of Michigan to fulfill its moral obligation to provide equal educational opportunities to children that have been denied a fair shake for far too long. This victory is their victory, and in this moment the children and their families and the teachers of Detroit have taught a nation what it means to fight for justice and win.”

Michael Jordan Buys Bubba Wallace-Led Nascar Cup Series Team

(Source: Cedric ‘BIG CED’ Thornton, <https://www.blackenterprise.com>)

NBA legend Michael Jordan announced the purchase of a NASCAR Cup Series Charter with Bubba Wallace as the driver when the 2021 NASCAR Cup Series season begins. The news comes after Wallace revealed on Sept. 10 that he will no longer be racing for Richard Petty Motorsports.

Jordan, who is the current owner of the NBA’s Charlotte Hornets, will be the majority owner of a NASCAR Cup Series team while Denny Hamlin is a minority owner of the single-car team.

“Growing up in North Carolina, my parents would take my brothers, sisters and me to races, and I’ve been a NASCAR fan my whole life,” Jordan said in a news release. “The opportunity to own my own racing team in partnership with my friend, Denny Hamlin, and to have Bubba Wallace driving for us, is very exciting for me. Historically, NASCAR has struggled with diversity and there have been few Black owners. The timing seemed perfect as NASCAR is evolving and embracing social change more and more.

“In addition to the recent commitment and donations I have made to combat systemic racism, I see this as a chance to educate a new audience and open more opportunities for Black people in racing.”

Hamlin will remain a driver of the No. 11 Toyota for Joe Gibbs Racing, where his Cup Series career began in 2005. He has six wins this year and is one of the favorites to win the 2020 championship.

“Bubba has shown tremendous improvement since joining the Cup Series and we believe he’s ready to take his career



to a higher level,” Hamlin stated. “He deserves the opportunity to compete for race wins and our team will make sure he has the resources to do just that. Off the track, Bubba has been a loud voice for change in our sport and our country. MJ and I support him fully in those efforts and stand beside him.”

Wallace said: “This is a unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I believe is a great fit for me at this point in my career. Both Michael and Denny are great competitors and are focused on building the best team they possibly can to go out and compete for race wins. I’m grateful and humbled that Michael and Denny believe in me and I’m super pumped to begin this adventure with them.”

Former Black Panther Jalil Muntaqim To Be Released From Prison After 49 Years

(Source: Dana Sanchez, <https://www.moguldom.com>)

Former Black Panther Jalil Muntaqim, 68, became eligible for parole 22 years ago after being accused in the 1971 murder of two police officers in Harlem. He finally won his decades-long fight for freedom after going before the parole board at least 10 times.

Muntaqim, aka. Anthony Bottom, faced “virulent” opposition from the New York police union — the Police Benevolent Association — and by the widow of one of the murdered police officers, The Guardian reported.

After almost half a century in prison, a New York parole board this month ordered Muntaqim released by Oct. 20 from the maximum-security Sullivan correctional facility in upstate New York.

That’s “a long time for a 19-year-old to go to prison and be there for the rest of their lives,” said Antoinette Russell, Muntaqim’s daughter and only child, in a 2018 Guardian interview. Russell was born six months after her father’s arrest.

Muntaqim was 18 when he joined the Black Panther Party which promoted Black nationalism, socialism, and armed self-defense — particularly against police brutality. He joined the armed Black Liberation Army.

During a three-hour filmed interview with the Guardian in 2018, Muntaqim said that in his years behind bars he had “evolved” from the revolutionary position that he adopted in 1971. However, he said that he remained committed to the cause of racial equality and justice.

As of 2017, 16 Black Panthers were still locked up in the U.S. — many, for charges from the late 1960s and 70s, Colorlines reported. Some have since died in prison or been released.

Edward Poindexter, convicted for killing a police officer in Omaha, Nebraska, had been in prison for 50 years as of August.

The seven surviving members of the Move 9, Black liberationists and environmentalists from Philadelphia who were arrested in 1978 after a police siege of their communal home, were all released on parole in the past two years.

Muntaqim and two co-defendants each were sentenced to 25 years to life for the killings of two police officers who answered what they believed was a domestic dispute call. The police were then ambushed and shot. Albert “Nuh” Washington died in



(Image: from Guardian/YouTube video)

prison in 2000, and Herman Bell was released on parole in April 2018, Guardian reported.

“We did not receive a fair trial,” Muntaqim told the Guardian in 2018. “There were multiple coverups in this case.”

BLACK NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Local, State, National and Around the World

Teen Activist Marley Dias Joins Forces With Airbnb to Take Kids On Virtual Field Trips

(Source: Shanique Yates, <https://www.afrotech.com>; image: Mike Coppola/Getty Images for Tory Burch Foundation)

School may be virtual for the little ones but that does not mean that field trips can't happen.

Teen activist, #1000BlackGirlBooks founder, and executive producer of Netflix's "Bookmarks," Marley Dias, is set to host online experiences with Airbnb this Fall to allow children to still experience field trips despite the circumstances of COVID-19.

The 15-year-old is joining forces with TV science teacher Bill Nye, and actor and director Olivia Wilde to headline the vacation rental company's new collection of Online Experiences.

The virtual field trips have been designed to help parents broaden their kids' horizons with the help of passionate, expert hosts. We're talking Japanese samurais, dinosaur fossil adventures, and more out of this world experiences for both children and parents to engage in.

According to Airbnb, a new study of parents shows that extracurricular activities for their children are down 30 percent for those who typically take part in one structured activity during an average week.



"We want everyone, kids especially, to be curious," said Nye. "Asking questions and seeking answers is how we make discoveries and learn about the world around us. We'll encourage questions and share facts with a new generation about some of this year's hottest topics in science. It'll be a blast.

Dias will host "How to be a Social Problem Solver" alongside her parents to discuss her passion for inclusivity, equity, and social change while Nye will host "Decoding the Science of 2020." Wilde will also host a "Socially Conscious Story Hour."

Fabiana Pierre-Louis

Makes History as the Youngest & First Black Woman to be Appointed to the New Jersey Supreme Court

(Source: Abriana Walton, <https://www.afrotech.com>; Image: Twitter / @HUNewJersey-Club)

In 2020, Black women continue to break through barriers to success and lead the charge to enact change. New Jersey attorney Fabiana Pierre-Louis is one of the latest women to do just that.

Pierre-Louis has been appointed as the first Black woman Supreme Court Justice in New Jersey.

The state's Governor, Phil Murphy, nominated Pierre-Louis for the role in June and the Senate confirmed the decision last week, reports Black Enterprise.

"I'm incredibly proud that the Senate has unanimously confirmed Fabiana Pierre-Louis as the next Associate Justice to serve on New Jersey's Supreme Court," Murphy said in a statement, according to ABC7 News.

As a Haitian American and daughter of immigrants, Pierre-Louis says she hopes to inspire others with similar backgrounds.



"The thought of actually sitting on the court one day was not something that came across my mind as a law clerk," Pierre-Louis said to ABC7 News. "I think my end game as a law student was to become an attorney and hopefully make an impact on the legal profession, in some way."

Pierre-Louis now sits as the youngest person to ever serve on the state's Supreme Court.

"It's a difficult time to be a student," Dias said. "Without the structure of the traditional school experience in place, it's important we find creative ways to incorporate immersive and engaging activities into our increasingly virtual lives. Airbnb's new collection of Online Experiences is a treasure trove of extracurriculars for

kids like me who are looking to connect with the world around us from home."

Per Airbnb, Online Experiences will range from \$7 to \$100. For more information on how you and a child in your life can take advantage of this new exciting program, visit Airbnb's website here.

R&B Singer Akon Set To Build Futuristic "Wakanda" City in Senegal, Worth \$6B

(Source: Aisha Salaudeen, <https://www.cnn.com/travel>)

The award-winning R&B singer Akon is going ahead with ambitious plans to build a "futuristic" city in Senegal that he says will be a real-life version of Wakanda, the hi-tech nation portrayed in Marvel blockbuster "Black Panther."

On Monday, Akon, real name Aliaume Damala Badara Akon Thiam, laid the first stone for Akon city in Mbodiene park, 100 kilometers from Dakar, the country's capital city, and said work would begin next year.

"We are looking at Akon city to become the beginning of Africa's future," he said at the ceremony also attended by Alioune Sarr, Senegal's minister for tourism, and other government officials. "Our idea is to build a futuristic city that incorporates all the latest technologies, cryptocurrencies, and also the future of how African society should become in the future."

According to its official website, the solar-powered city will have healthcare facilities, offices, luxury houses, shopping malls, skyscrapers, and eco-friendly tourist centers. It will be a five-minute drive from the country's new international airport.

The singer was gifted 2,000 acres of land by Senegalese President Macky Sall to build the ambitious city. Akon also said he has raised part of the \$6 billion required to do so through unnamed investors.

He first announced his idea for the idealistic city back in 2018 where he compared it to the fictional technologically advanced nation of Wakanda portrayed in "Black Panther."



(Image: instagram)

The singer -- who spent his early childhood in Senegal before leaving for New Jersey at the age of seven, according to his website -- said Akon city would create job opportunities for Senegalese people and serve as an alternative destination African Americans facing discrimination in the United States.

"I wanted to build a city or a project like this that would give them (African Americans) the motivation to know that there is a home back home... The system back home (in the US) treats them unfairly in so many different ways that you can never imagine and they only go through it because they feel like there is no other way," he explained.

He added that his hope is for Senegal to be the go-to tourist destination in Africa as a result of Akon city.

"As you are coming from America or Europe, anywhere in the diaspora and you feel that you want to visit Africa, we want Senegal to be your first stop," he says.

Alioune Sarr, the Senegalese tourism minister, cheered Akon's decision to invest in the country at this time when the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the nation's economy. "At a time, in a context where national and international private investment is rare. Akon, you have chosen to come to Senegal and invest \$6 billion in the coming years," Sarr said.

Africa's tourism industry was hit hard by the pandemic as airports, hotels, restaurants, event centers and tour companies across the continent shut down as a way to curb the spread of the virus.

Alongside a curfew, Senegal, in particular, closed its airport, land, and sea borders for four months.

This is not Akon's first major investment on the continent. Over the past years, the entertainer has signed off on major deals in Africa.

In 2014, for example, he started Akon Lighting Africa, a charity project in partnership with the World Bank and governments to provide solar-powered electricity for 600 million Africans. According to Lighting Africa's official website, the project is functional in 25 countries across the continent.



ZACK ZAPPONE

For State Representative | 6th LD | D

I'm running for state representative to fight for everyone to have a fair shot.

This means racial and social justice, equitable school systems, living wage jobs that protect workers, and affordable health care.

Our current crisis has laid bare the inequalities we've been living with for years. As a teacher, I've been fighting for an equitable education system, by advocating for curriculum and discipline changes. However, I've seen the barriers to success inside and outside of the classroom.

I will be an elected official who keeps equity and inclusion at the forefront of my mind when proposing and voting on legislation.

Please contact me anytime. I want to be a legislator who is responsive and fights for your needs to make sure everyone has a fair shot.



Education

North Central High School Graduate
Georgetown University, Bachelor of Arts
University of Washington, Teaching Certificate
Princeton University, Master in Public Affairs

Experience

Public School Teacher
Health Coverage Consultant
Higher Education Specialist
Transportation Analyst

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A Different View

with 



Photo Credit: Maddie Pearson

Betsy Wilkerson, Spokane City Council

VOTING: A Privilege, Right or Responsibility?

People often criticize Blacks for not voting. Sometimes we even criticize ourselves. Black people not wanting to vote simply isn't true relative to other racial groups. We must take into account the way that Blacks have been and still are systematically being denied the ability to vote. I have only to go back to the Bloody Sunday incident of 1965 and the reduction of polling places in majority Black areas that is currently happening to make my point. Additionally, voter disenfranchisement, voter roll purges, voter suppression as well as gerrymandering are major factors affecting Black, Indigenous, Hispanic and Asian voter turnout.

So this month I really want to talk to you about the importance of voting. All of us have seen the craziness of this political season at the local, State and Federal Level. This has been an extremely educational season for me about what it takes to run for elected office. Having been appointed, I have yet to experience it first hand. Former Vice President Biden says, "We are fighting for the Soul of America." What does that fight mean to you? On the local and national level do you realize we could change the political leadership with OUR vote! It's true when they say all politics is local. We have a presidential race, Judges (local and State-wide), County Commissioners, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and many more on the ballot. These people who are elected will directly affect our lives and our children's lives for years to come with their vote and policy decisions.

Often we wish that our political officials were more diverse with more women, Black, Indigenous and People of Color. Do you know what it takes and what we are asking of them? To really diversify our elected offices you will have to step up and contribute to help finance the candidate of your choice. In this election season you have all been called, emailed or maybe someone has been to your door. I just want to remind you that Freedom is not free. It's going to cost us the three resources often

mentioned in Scripture, "time, talent and treasure." In the last election here in Spokane the average campaign cost for a City Council seat was \$23,864.59, the average campaign cost for Spokane Council President was \$109,142.59, and among the top six candidates for the Mayoral race the price tag was \$114,062.80. Campaigns also take hours and hours of calling donors, voters and volunteers, it also takes a lot of time for community forums, interviews and knocking on doors. Again it takes a lot of time, talent and treasure.

So, what do you think? Is voting a privilege, a right or a responsibility? I think it is all of them for me. As Black people, let us not take for granted what our forefathers/ mothers and families died for. In the 1950s, Carl Maxey was probably the first when he ran for the Washington State Legislature but lost. It wasn't until 1969 that we saw representation manifest when Robert Taylor won a seat on the Spokane Public School Board. Of course in 1975, former Mayor Jim Chase was narrowly elected to become the first Black City Council Member, and because of his fight for transparency and advocacy for youth programs, he was reelected by a larger margin, at that time becoming the first City Council Member to be reelected in six years. Of course, he went on to become Spokane's first Black Mayor in 1981, winning in an electoral landslide.

I'm sure that win inspired the first Black female candidate to put her name forward in 1987, when Sarah Gardner ran, earning 1,098 votes and finishing an honorable seventh in a ten-person primary. It wasn't until 1995, when former Council Member Roberta Greene won in a seven person primary and then was reelected in 1999. Last year, Phil Tyler ran for Council President and Jerrall Haynes ran for City Council, but neither made it past the primary. I was unanimously appointed in January when Council President Beggs won his race, vacating the Council position I now hold.

Continued on Page 15

ANDY WILL CONTINUE TO DELIVER RESULTS
FOR SPOKANE AS HE WORKS TO CREATE
OPPORTUNITY, PROSPERITY AND EQUITY
THROUGHOUT OUR COMMUNITY.



Re-Elect

ANDY

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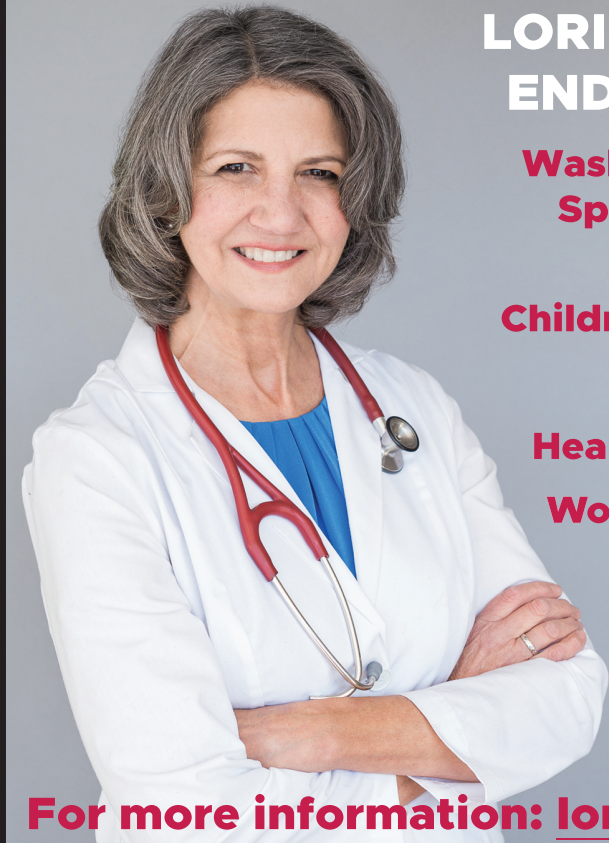
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Black Lens Election Issue Candidate Questions

Each year the Black Lens publishes an election issue. The issue contains questions for candidates that focus on issues impacting the Black community. The questions are certainly not comprehensive, but my intention is to give you a snapshot of each candidate. Candidate answers are printed verbatim. Candidates are contacted weeks in advance and are given at least one, in some cases two reminders. Thank you to those candidates who respected our community and this publication enough to respond. I indicated those candidates who chose not to respond. I encourage you to read each response and use them as a guide when deciding who to vote for.

U.S. Congressional Representative

Cathy McMorris Rodgers

Dave Wilson

(Prefers Republican Party)

1) What do you see as the fundamental difference(s) between you and your opponent?

I am proud to have a proven record of delivering results for the hardworking people of Eastern Washington. In the last two years, I have co-sponsored 39 bills passed in the House, ten of which have been signed into law. These have included police reform, improved mapping for rural broadband deployment, data security and privacy protections, modernizing the farm workforce, connecting small and medium-size farms to food banks, and more. I have fought to expand Fairchild Air Force Base, bring more doctors to our region, and protect our dams.

2) The country is currently polarized on the issue of race, among other things. What actions, if any, do you think members of congress should be taking, that they are not currently taking, to address how polarized and divided this country has become on the issue of race?

We need to be having courageous, honest conversations about racism in America. Conversations that bring people together, not divide them apart. Let us go forward with hope and love for each other, choosing to have faith in one another. I've come to believe that the best way to predict the future is to invent it. Let us come together to invent a future where no one is treated differently on the basis of their skin color. Let us create a future where we treat one another with value and respect, rather than succumbing to a culture of contempt and polarization. I am committed to continuing to meet with people on the other side of the aisle to make this happen.

3) Please explain your understanding of structural racism and what impact (if any) it has on the African American community?

There is no question that historic racism has had a lingering impact on the Black community. That is why I celebrated the fact that at the beginning of the year, there was record low unemployment and record high homeownership in the Black community. I firmly believe that the job is the opportunity for a better life. I am committed to bringing back that thriving economy bigger and better than ever.

4) What are your thoughts on the F rating that you received from the NAACP in their Civil Rights Legislative Report Card?

I have been proud to come together with members of the community for Peace-



ful Communities Roundtable and to have gone on a Civil Rights Pilgrimage with the late Representative John Lewis. These have been learning experiences for me and have helped me to appreciate the wonderful depth of diversity we have in our community. I was particularly glad that when the Republicans had the majority in both houses of Congress and the White House, we ushered in a booming economy that saw record low unemployment and record high homeownership among the Black community. Seeing that renewed my belief that free enterprise and individual liberty are the best way toward peace and prosperity for all.

5) COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on the African American community. What is your assessment of that impact and how well the pandemic was handled by congress, both nationally and locally? Is there anything that could have been done better?

At the outset of the coronavirus pandemic Congress was able to come together and take quick action. I supported historic relief measures for people impacted by no fault of their own. This included the stimulus checks and the Paycheck Protection Program, designed to help employers keep their employees on the payroll. Since then, I have supported further relief measures, but have been disappointed to see them blocked by partisan interests.

6) Do you feel there is any middle ground between those who support the 2nd Amendment and those who support gun control legislation? Why or why not?

Yes, because both 2nd Amendment advocates, like myself, and gun control advocates want to keep guns out of the hands of people who should not have them. As long as new gun control measures do not infringe up on the rights of law abiding citizens, I think there can be common ground.

Continued on Page 11

(Prefers Democratic Party)

1) What do you see as the fundamental difference(s) between you and your opponent?

Rep. McMorris Rodgers' rating by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for her 2018 positions is 19%. Her rating by Common Cause for the same period is 0%. I will support and advocate legislation promoted by both important organizations.

2) The country is currently polarized on the issue of race, among other things. What actions, if any, do you think members of congress should be taking, that they are not currently taking, to address how polarized and divided this country has become on the issue of race?

Congress should act to create legislation, programs, and funding that will promote racial equity, by focusing on fairness and justice. In addition, when one of its members, or a member of the administration, says or does anything racist, Congress should rebuke them. Only by consistently demonstrating to the country, that racism is unacceptable will public opinion begin to change over time.

3) Please explain your understanding of structural racism and what impact (if any) it has on the African American community?

It is the racial bias in society and across institutions. It is the cumulative and compounding effects of many factors that has systematically accorded privilege to white people and disadvantage people of color.

4) What are your thoughts on the F rating that your opponent received from the NAACP in their Civil Rights Legislative Report Card?

I find her actions and voting record reprehensible. Her rating is well-deserved. Her continuing silence regarding Donald Trump's dog whistle remarks is offensive. McMorris Rodgers shows no political courage or leadership in this area.

5) COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on the African American community. What is your assessment of that impact and how well the pandemic was handled by congress, both nationally and locally? Is there anything that could have been done better?

Rather than Congress, I hold the Trump Administration accountable for the inept handling of the pandemic. First and foremost, President Trump should have told the American people the truth about the



virus; instead he deliberately downplayed the risks, from the very beginning to the present. He should have created a coordinated national plan to fight the pandemic instead of foisting it upon all 50 governors. He downplays wearing of masks, undermines his own experts, and has touted unproven medications. He did not do enough to create emergency production of PPE products, or plentiful and effective testing with contact tracing. Donald Trump deserves a failing grade for his mismanagement of this national crisis.

6) Do you feel there is any middle ground between those who support the 2nd Amendment and those who support gun control legislation? Why or why not?

Yes, I do. I think most Americans support second amendment rights and reasonable gun control. We should ask all citizens to demand their elected representatives and the leadership of gun organizations, like the NRA, to work together to come up with commonsense solutions.

7) Do you feel there is any role that Congress can play in addressing the national calls for criminal justice reform?

What reform must accomplish, is addressing the large number of people serving time in the federal justice system and the unfair sentences some are serving. Reforming the federal justice system is an imperative that we cannot ignore. In 2019, a major reform bill was enacted: The First Step Act, which reduced some federal drug sentences and sought to improve conditions in federal prison. But the law is just a first step in a much longer process. Other changes, like modernizing the federal clemency process and diverting people who commit lower-level crimes to alternatives to incarceration, will also be necessary to improve the federal justice system, and the lives of the people caught up in it.

8) COVID-19 demonstrated the need that exists particularly for communities of color to have access to healthcare.

Continued on Page 11

Justice G. Helen Whitener

2020 “Passing the Torch” Award Recipient Up For Election

Washington Supreme Court Justice G. Helen Whitener has been named the 2020 recipient of the Washington Women Lawyers (WWL) “Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst Passing the Torch Award,” which will be presented by the WWL in October.

Whitener was named for her dedication and efforts to mentor young women of diverse backgrounds to enter the legal profession. In addition to her mentoring efforts throughout her career, Justice Whitener also helped to create Pierce County’s “Color of Justice Program” (an adaptation of the National Association of Women Judges

program) that provides young women an inspirational opportunity to meet and interact with female judges and those of color. Due to its success, the program has since been adopted by other courts throughout Washington State.

“This is such a well-deserved recognition for Justice Whitener,” said Chief Justice Debra Stephens. “As a colleague, she inspires us each day in her pursuit of justice and she has done so much to encourage the next generation to become leaders in the legal profession.”

Justice G. Helen Whitener, is the newest member of the WA State Supreme Court. Justice Whitener served as a Pierce County Superior Court judge until her appointment by Governor Jay Inslee to the Washington State Supreme Court in April of this year. Prior to serving on the Superior Court bench, Justice Whitener served as a judge on the Washington State Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals and as a pro-tem judge in Pierce County District Court and the City of Tacoma Municipal Court. Before becoming a judge, she litigated both civil and criminal cases for 15 years as first a prosecutor, a public defense attorney and later, as a managing partner of a law firm.

“I am truly honored and humbled to be the 20th recipient of WWL’s Passing the Torch Award and only the second since it was renamed in 2019 in honor of retired Justice Mary Fairhurst, former Chief Justice of the WA State Supreme Court,” said Jus-

tice Whitener. “This is such a significant milestone in my life as a jurist and one of those celebratory recognitions that I will remember always and with gratitude. I will carry this Torch with pride and promise to uphold the principles encompassed in this Award as I continue in my journey as your Supreme Court Justice.”

Justice Whitener teaches new judges at the WA State Judicial College and also teaches a “Street Law” civics class at a local high school in Tacoma. Justice Whitener lectures locally, nationally, and internationally on human rights, access to justice, and the rule of law in protecting the rights of all who appear before the court to basic dignity and respect in judicial proceedings.

The Passing the Torch award was renamed last year in honor of former Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst, a former President of WWL. The WWL serves as Washington’s largest organization dedicated to furthering the full integration of women in the legal profession and promoting equal rights and opportunities for women.

Of this year’s award Fairhurst said, “I am very pleased that Justice Whitener is the recipient this year,” she said. “She is most deserving and has been a wonderful mentor and served as a role model to many for a long time.”

Whitener is also known for her commitment to justice and equity. She serves as co-chair of the Washington State Minority



and Justice Commission and as a member of the Civil Legal Aid Oversight Committee.

Last year, Whitener was also awarded the Washington State Bar Association’s C.Z. Smith Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award, the King County Washington Women Lawyers President Award, and the Seattle University School of Law’s Woman of the Year Award, among others.

Justice Whitener is up for election in November to complete the remaining two-year term of recently retired Justice Charles Wiggins. For more information visit www.keepjusticewhitener.com. A full biography can be found at www.courts.wa.gov.



Dave Wilson

Continued from Page 10

What is your position on the Affordable Care Act? Why are you for or against it? What alternative exists, if any?

I believe that healthcare should be a right and not a privilege. The Affordable Care Act was a good start and should be maintained and improved upon. As a next step to ensuring that all Americans have health insurance, we should make a free or affordable public option available to all. A 5-10-year process should be put into place to gradually move our healthcare system to one where health insurance is not tied to employment, everyone is covered, and costs are greatly reduced. As a nation, we currently pay more than two times as much for our healthcare as other developed countries.

9) The President has promised to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on climate change, which is an agreement among 195 nations to cut their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Are you in agreement with this decision? Why or why not?

I am not in agreement with this decision. Climate change is an existential threat. The U.S. needs to be an example and a leader in this important area.

10) Is there a role that congress can play in addressing the racial disparities that currently exist for African Americans in housing, employment, education, healthcare and incarceration, among others? If so, what is it?

I believe a comprehensive approach is needed to accomplish these objectives. Below are some of the areas that programs need to be created in to help all disadvantaged people of color:

1. Health insurance for all
2. Address Income inequality
3. Address institutionalized racism – start and fund programs to help minorities:
 - a. Start small businesses
 - b. Increase homeownership
 - c. Gain additional financial aid for college
4. Increase the Federal minimum wage
5. Better mental health treatment and services
6. Police reform, including more civilian oversight
7. More treatment and support for people battling addiction

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Cathy McMorris Rodgers

Continued from Page 10

7) Do you feel there is any role that Congress can play in addressing the national calls for criminal justice reform?

Yes, I was glad to join my colleagues in introducing the JUSTICE Act in the House to make reforms to policing in America and work to rebuild the trust that has been broken over recent weeks, months, and years by increasing transparency and accountability within local police departments and prioritize training resources so our police can better protect and serve our communities.

8) COVID-19 demonstrated the need that exists particularly for communities of color to have access to healthcare. What is your position on the Affordable Care Act? Why are you for or against it? What alternative exists, if any?

While the healthcare system was not an efficient and competitive marketplace before the Affordable Care Act, it’s worse now, thanks to its regulatory octopus, which hurts the little guy –smaller rural hospitals, doctors’ practices, and patients – while boosting the market share of the big guys who can afford the army of advisors necessary to comply with exploding administrative burdens (billing, medical records, legal compliance, and liability insurance). Everyone should have the right to choose their own health care, and not be forced to purchase a one-size-fits-all scheme that straightjackets consumer rights and expectations. Rather than consolidating further into an unaccountable Leviathan -- “Medicare for All” – my goal is to move toward a less bureaucratic system that fosters innovation, cost discipline and accountability, a free market where providers compete for consumers by offering patient-centered and

affordable options, including to low-income consumers.

9) The President has promised to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on climate change, which is an agreement among 195 nations to cut their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Are you in agreement with this decision? Why or why not?

Yes, the Paris Agreement placed an unnecessary burden on the United States, while not holding China, the world’s leading polluter, accountable. Over the last few years, the United States has led the world in reducing emissions. According to the 2020 EPA comprehensive report on greenhouse gas emissions, total energy-related CO2 emissions in the United States decreased by 12 percent between 2005-2018, while global emissions increased 24 percent. This is due to the rise of the clean energy industry and market forces, not government policies or paper-thin international agreements that the worst polluters don’t follow anyway.

10) Is there a role that congress can play in addressing the racial disparities that currently exist for African Americans in housing, employment, education, healthcare and incarceration, among others? If so, what is it?

Congress and federal courts have made it abundantly clear over the years that discrimination on the basis of race violates the Constitution. Congress has, and should, designate bodies within the federal government to monitor and prosecute racial discrimination. I am in full support of that effort.

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WA State Senator - Legislative District 3

Andy Billig

Dave Lucas

(Prefers Democratic Party)

1) Highlight 1-2 of your qualifications that make you the best candidate specifically as it relates to Spokane’s African American community?

I have the experience and relationships to deliver for Spokane generally and for Spokane’s African American community specifically. My experience as a community volunteer, small business owner and legislator provide me with the tools and knowledge to help create opportunity, prosperity and equity throughout Spokane. Since even before I was first elected, I have focused on listening to the African American community and have delivered on the requests and priorities I heard communicated to me. Specific results include capital budget grant awards for the Carl Maxey Center, the Emmanuel Life Center and the East Central Community Center.

2) How have you effectively worked with members of the African American community in the Spokane area? What were the outcomes? Please give concrete examples.

I have regularly engaged with the African American community to listen and learn. And, I have helped deliver results based on what I heard, including support for priority projects like the capital budget projects mentioned in the previous answer. I have also had several meetings with the African American community to learn about priorities related to police accountability. I plan to take what I have heard in this area to Olympia as we create legislative proposals for the upcoming legislative session.

3) What direct experience do you have addressing issues related to racial equity?

I have spent my legislative career devoted to equity. My experience includes frequent interaction with the African American Community and many trainings I have participated in to further my personal journey on racial issues and to help me to be a better leader on equity issues.

4) What do you see as the priorities for the state budget and how do those budget priorities reflect a commitment to equity?

Almost everything in the state budget supports vital services to the people of Washington, and cuts to those services will disproportionately impact communities of color. I am committed to adding funding for the areas of the budget that most support equity, particularly early learning/child care. Another budget priority is to fund the Office of Equity which was created last year. This office will help legislators and agencies to do a better job of making budget and legislative decisions with an equity lens.

5) What is your understanding of the term structural racism and how it im-



pacts people of color? What do you see as your role (if any) in addressing it?

Structural racism is the racism embedded in the systems and institutions of our society. In some ways structural racism is harder to combat than overt racism because it is not as obvious but it can be just as damaging to individuals and our society as a whole. The Legislature in general and me as an individual legislator definitely have a role in addressing structural racism. We need to actively search for, and dismantle, structural racism in the criminal justice system, the educational system, health care system, elections, candidate recruitment, staff hiring, contract awarding, and throughout state government.

6) What is your understanding of the racial disparities that exist in Washington State and what are your thoughts on how, as a State Senator, you can address them?

There are significant racial disparities in Washington State in the criminal justice system, the educational system, in health outcomes and many other areas. We have a lot of tools available to address racial disparities including using an equity lens as we make decisions about bills and budgets. For specific solutions, I will continue to listen to experts in our community including Black leaders.

7) In the past few months, racial justice has become a national topic of conversation. What do you think it will take in order for racial justice to be achieved?

We first need to identify and acknowledge the disparities and systemic racism that exists and then come up with very specific solutions. To pass those solutions into law it will take a continued wave of community support for change just as we have seen in recent months. The protests and marches are working. There is now a spotlight on racial justice and momentum that will help us make progress. Justice is not an easy goal to achieve, but we should not settle for anything else.

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(Prefers Republican Party)

1) Highlight 1-2 of your qualifications that make you the best candidate specifically as it relates to Spokane’s African American community?

I have spent my entire adult life serving others. I am a servant leader that wants to help others succeed and achieve their greatest self. This style of leadership was what I relied on while serving in the Marine Corps, serving with every race, creed, color and sexual orientation. I have continued that service as a volunteer, working to serve those more marginalized in our community in numerous local non-profits and ad-hoc organizations, as well as my private activities.

2) How have you effectively worked with members of the African American community in the Spokane area? What were the outcomes? Please give concrete examples.

I have been committed to serving the African American community as far back as my role in supporting the Rwanda relief effort in Africa, when serving with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit. Most recently, I served as a committee member for the last two years on the Veteran Stand Down and the Homeless Connect event. I have also taken it upon myself to help homeless with vehicle repairs. These efforts served the marginalized in our community to find resources to improve their life and secure housing. In addition, my work with Veterans has been relatively broad; I personally donate my time and money to assist African American disabled Veterans with their homes and yards. I am a person who gets out there and puts my values into action, where those actions bear the deepest impact.

3) What direct experience do you have addressing issues related to racial equity?

I have worked tirelessly to ensure equity for all in having been a leader in the Marine Corps for nearly 22 years, an organization that focuses on the character of a person, not the color of their skin.

4) What do you see as the priorities for the state budget and how do those budget priorities reflect a commitment to equity?

We need to ensure that we do not have a budget that will adversely impact those already struggling in this difficult economy. I believe the budget priority would be to ensure that we do not unfairly burden our state with debt, leading to a large recession and a tougher job market. As your next Senator, I would encourage growth so that there are great opportunities for everyone in our state.



5) What is your understanding of the term structural racism and how it impacts people of color? What do you see as your role (if any) in addressing it?

First and foremost, I think each of us should set a personal example of fighting for equality in all our actions, both personal and professional. Leaders lead from the front by their actions, fighting racism.

6) What is your understanding of the racial disparities that exist in Washington State and what are your thoughts on how, as a State Senator, you can address them?

The state has focused on taxing and spending without achieving the results of lifting-up the most marginalized in our state. We need a state legislature that is focused on serving the people and not themselves or their lobbyists and special interests. As your next Senator, I will work to strengthen the economy to bring prosperity to those that have been struggling, especially now as the economy has been depressed. I will also focus on improving our educational opportunities. One way to give our marginalized communities better options is for the legislature to increase school choice options to give everyone in our community the best education opportunities possible.

7) In the past few months, racial justice has become a national topic of conversation. What do you think it will take in order for racial justice to be achieved?

We need to change the tenor of our public servants. Our public servants sometimes act like they are being served by the people instead of the other way around. You can just look at their high salaries and self-imposed raises, while most of the population is suffering under economic despair. We need a system that focuses on serving the community. This lack of selfless service should be apparent to anyone walking into a courtroom or involved in the legal system. We need to change the current status quo.

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WA State Representative - Leg. Dist. 3

Marcus Riccelli

Position 1

Laura D Carder

(Prefers Democratic Party)

1) What do you see as the role of a State Representative as it relates to the local Spokane Community?

The role of a state representative is twofold: to be an active, engaged listener, and then bring what you learn to Olympia to create policy that serves our community. Spokane has unique needs, and my job is to go to bat for our community so that every person, regardless of their race, zip code, or economic status has a fair shot at success and stability. You, the employer, deserve a representative who will be transparent and accountable.



2) Highlight 1-2 of your qualifications that make you the best candidate specifically as it relates to Spokane’s African American community?

1- In my job working to support community health, I have gained a strong understanding of the deep impact of social determinants of health and how they are impacting our African American community disproportionately. Working with partners I have successfully implemented programs and the required infrastructure to remove barriers that make it easier for patients to access healthcare.

2- I successfully navigate the political process as a legislator to help break down barriers both historic and political to help achieve equitable outcomes. When African American community leaders reach out for assistance on specific projects or programs, I work tirelessly to deliver for them (see below).

3) How have you effectively worked with members of the African American community in the Spokane area? What were the outcomes? Please give concrete examples.

I worked with leaders in the community to help deliver funds for important community projects such as the MLK, Jr. Family Outreach Center, Emmanuel Life Center and Carl Maxey Center. Communities of color struggle disproportionately with oral health disease which is preventable. I championed funding to provide dental access for 48,000 new low-income patients a year including for the new East Central Dental Clinic.

4) What direct experience do you have addressing issues related to racial equity?

I strongly advocated and voted for policies like paycheck fairness, paid sick and safe leave, and evidence-based restorative justice practices. I authored and passed the nation’s strongest bill to ban rental housing discrimination, and supported significant investments in our state’s housing trust fund. I have both worked for and voted for meaningful police reforms under I-940, and am proud to continue productive dialogues to seek additional changes that improve trust and break down historic bias.

5) What is your understanding of the term structural racism and how it impacts people of color? What do you see as your role (if any) in addressing it?

Serving in the legislature is a privilege, and I consider it my responsibility to use that privilege in service of people who have been systematically oppressed and marginalized. I support policies that work to promote dignity and justice for everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, ability, religion, gender identity/expression, or sexual orientation.

6) What do you see as the biggest challenge(s) facing African Americans in the Spokane area and what are your thoughts on how, as a State Representative, you can address the challenge(s)?

We must reverse inequities many face such as providing additional resources for early learning to help close the opportunity gap, and provide access to capital for small business owners and others shut out of traditional banking relationships. We need healthcare access to address the disproportionate impacts of this pandemic on communities of color. We must pass a comprehensive legislative package regarding police tactics, increased transparency and strengthening accountability.

7) In the past few months, racial justice has become a national topic of conversation. What do you think it will take in order for racial justice to be achieved?

It is critical to truly address racial inequality and economic justice, and demand accountability as we reimagine what is possible when we overhaul structures rooted in, and perpetuated by, racial inequality. It will take strong local and state leadership, working to implement policies that are developed by and for the communities impacted. It will also take a change in President.

Contact
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http://marcusriccelli.com

(Prefers Republican Party)

No
Response.



Contact
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WA State Representative - Leg. Dist. 3

Timm OrmsbyPosition 2Bob Apple

(Prefers Democratic Party)

1) What do you see as the role of a State Representative as it relates to the local Spokane Community?

I think my role as a State Representative is to be accountable to our community about state government issues and to be a conduit of information to and from constituents about state government programs, services, policies and funding. Also, to approach decision-making with an understanding and appreciation for our local opportunities and challenges. And finally, to advance a Spokane values-based agenda in Olympia to adequately fund services, and enact policies and budgets that make Spokane a great place to live and thrive.

2) Highlight 1-2 of your qualifications that make you the best candidate specifically as it relates to Spokane's African American community?

I believe I can be an effective State Representative and advocate for Spokane's African American community because of my deeply held belief that we must build a more inclusive community and economy. As the Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, I take full advantage of that position to champion adequate funding for the state programs and services that are truly socio-economic equalizers.

3) How have you effectively worked with members of the African American community in the Spokane area? What were the outcomes? Please give concrete examples.

I have worked to secure funding for the construction, expansion and improvement at all the community centers, WCCC, NECC and ECCC (now Martin Luther King Jr. Center at East Central), the Emmanuel Center, Proclaim Liberty and the Carl Maxey Center. These safe spaces provide access to child care/early learning, mentoring, housing, weatherization, arts & culture, employment, health care and homelessness services. I remain optimistic about ongoing efforts to improve policing, sentencing, incarceration and re-entry in the next term.

4) What direct experience do you have addressing issues related to racial equity?

My experience addressing racial equity has largely been through my work in the legislature. I have a lengthy record of supporting policies that promote equity and play a large role in the state budget process to deliver the programs and services necessary for equal opportunity and equitable access to public resources.

5) What is your understanding of the term structural racism and how it im-



pacts people of color? What do you see as your role (if any) in addressing it?

I believe structural racism is the normalization of biases that routinely disadvantage people of color. This is counter to a healthy society that celebrates diversity. It is my responsibility to make intentional efforts to recognize structural racism as I encounter it in my legislative duties. Structural racism is a barrier to inclusion, individual and family success as well as a thriving, vibrant and prosperous community.

6) What do you see as the biggest challenge(s) facing African Americans in the Spokane area and what are your thoughts on how, as a State Representative, you can address the challenge(s)?

The biggest challenges I see for African Americans in Spokane are access to opportunities and unequal treatment under the law. I see my responsibility in the Legislature as doggedly pursuing adequate funding for state programs and services that provide equitable access to education, health care, housing, quality child care, nutrition, arts, and employment opportunities for communities of color. The Legislature must also identify and remove barriers to equal treatment under the law and access to justice.

7) In the past few months, racial justice has become a national topic of conversation. What do you think it will take in order for racial justice to be achieved?

Achieving racial justice will require us to acknowledge that the systems and structures created to organize our society were built to advantage white, straight males. White privilege and racism has kept us from fulfilling our pledge of liberty and justice for all. Government must take the lead to remove these legacy barriers and rebuild them to address inequality and promote the general welfare. It is not enough to have a passing affection for racial justice, we must have a willful yearning for its promise.

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(Prefers Republican Party)

No Response.



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Bob@bobapple.com
No website listed



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WA State Senator - Legislative District 4

Mike Padden

John Roskelley

(Prefers Republican Party)

No
Response.

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https://www.paddenforsenate.com



(Prefers Democrat Party)

- 1) Highlight 1-2 of your qualifications that make you the best candidate specifically as it relates to Spokane's African American community?
- I am responsive to constituents and believe in racial equity and equality.
- 2) How have you effectively worked with members of the African American community in the Spokane area? What were the outcomes? Please give concrete examples.

As a former Spokane County Commissioner, I met with leaders of the black community over my 9 years in office to learn and take into consideration their issues when decided county business.

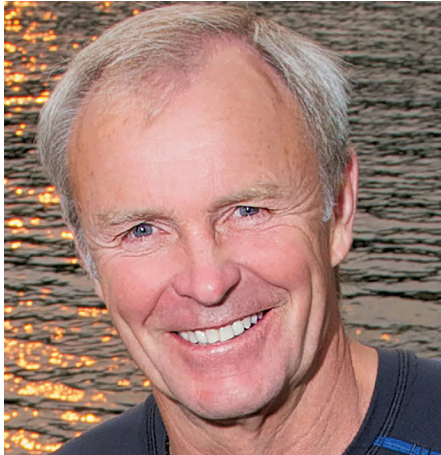
- 3) What direct experience do you have addressing issues related to racial equity?
- I do not have any direct experience in this matter.

- 4) What do you see as the priorities for the state budget and how do those budget priorities reflect a commitment to equity?

The state's budget is in a severe deficit due to COVID 19 and closures of businesses. Finding ways to balance the budget without hurting low income, disabled, and seniors will be my priority. Property and sales tax increases are off the table, as this hurts these people directly.

- 5) What is your understanding of the term structural racism and how it impacts people of color? What do you see as your role (if any) in addressing it?

I read the definition and it means the same as systemic racism. Systemic racism is in the workplace, government, law enforcement agencies, and just about everywhere else. People of color are marginalized by this type of racism in housing, work, education, and by law enforcement. The leg-



islature is responsible for practicing what it promotes – do no harm to every citizen. As such, it can pass laws that can help defeat systemic racism at all levels of business and government.

- 6) What is your understanding of the racial disparities that exist in Washington State and what are your thoughts on how, as a State Senator, you can address them?

I believe there is an abundance of racial disparities in every community. We are not living up to our commitments to the Constitution of the U.S. I grew up in Spokane and went to Shadle Park High School in 1964-67. I met only one non-white student in my K-12 years. At WSU, I took many classes with blacks, Chinese, Japanese, Indians, and other non-white students and know we can do better in equity and equality for all.

- 7) In the past few months, racial justice has become a national topic of conversation. What do you think it will take in order for racial justice to be achieved?

Education beginning at the earliest levels and continuing through school at the highest levels.

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A Different View with Betsy

Continued from Page 9

It's been almost two decades since Council Member Greene termed out. I, along with now-Spokane Public School Board President Jerrall Haynes and Council Member Jennifer Morton of Airway Heights, are the only three elected Black Leaders that I know of in the entire Spokane Region.

We need more folks to join in to be the change that we want to see and lift up the community! Now it's on you, I pass the baton asking you to take upon yourself the mantle of leadership! Even if you're not yet ready for elected office, sign up for leadership positions with organizations and nonprofits like the Spokane NAACP or the Parent Teacher Organization at your child (or grandchild)'s school. Volunteer with your local political party of choice or apply to be a non-partisan, civilian member of a subcommittee at the City. Who knows, you may be among the leaders that we have all been waiting for.

It all starts with voicing your opinion in this election by registering to vote at voter.vote.wa.gov or in person at the Spokane County Elections Office located at 1033 W Gardner Ave. (behind the Courthouse.)

Even if you have voted in the past, check that your voter registration is up to date with your current address or you won't receive your ballot in the mail.

No matter who you decide to vote for --- **PLEASE VOTE**, because at the end of the day it may be your vote that gets your person elected.

Keep in mind that even though they spent their time and treasure, the two top positions in our City were elected by only a handful of votes. Mayor Woodward won her race by 848 votes, and Council President Beggs won his race by 957 votes.

I leave you with the words of Senator Kamala Harris, the first Black Woman nominated for Vice President on a major ticket, "Years from now, this moment will have passed, and our children and our grandchildren will look in our eyes and ask us: Where were you when the stakes were so high? They will ask us, what was it like? And we will tell them, not just how we felt. We will tell them what we did."

In Solidarity,
Council Member Betsy Wilkerson
Spokane City Council
District 2, Position 2
bwilkerson@spokanecity.org

Kentucky Grand Jury Decision Brings No Justice in Breonna Taylor’s Death

By Aliyah Thompson

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - After 194 days since the death of 26-year-old emergency room technician Breonna Taylor, her family and Black Lives Matter protesters demanding justice were met with a response from the Kentucky grand jury. Officer Brett Hankison, one of the three police officers involved in Taylor’s death, was indicted with three counts of wanton endangerment in the first degree. However, this indictment stemmed from a civil lawsuit filed by Taylor’s next door neighbors, who had bullets from Hankison’s gun enter their apartment. Hankison was not indicted with any charges in direct relation to Taylor’s death itself.

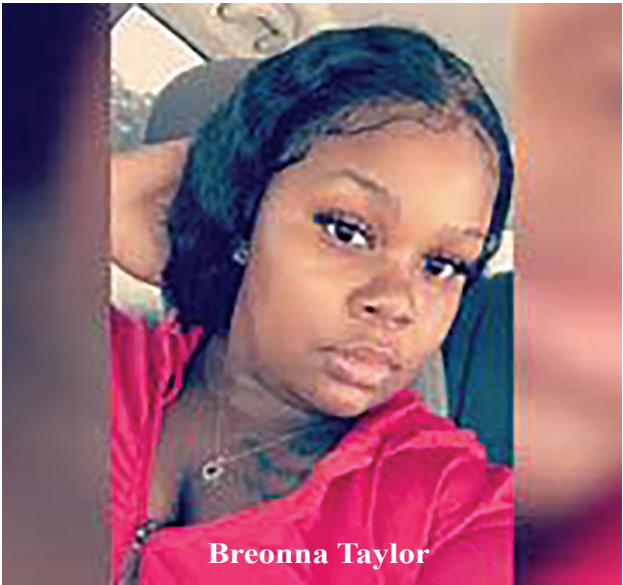
The other two police officers whose bullets ultimately resulted in Taylor’s death — Sergeant Jonathan Mattingly and Detective Myles Cosgrove — were not indicted. Attorney General Daniel Cameron’s investigation concluded that their actions were justified self-defense in response to an initial shot from Kenneth Walker III, Taylor’s boyfriend, despite the ability to use castle doctrine in Kentucky.

According to civil rights lawyer, activist and visiting law professor at the University of Louisville, Daniel Canon, castle doctrine has historically had no legs to stand on concerning encounters with police officers in a civilian’s home. If a civilian draws or fires a weapon on a police officer — whether the civilian knows the person intruding is a police officer or not — “nine times out of 10,” the encounter will end in the civilian’s death, “especially [if they’re] a person of color.” However, because Walker exited the encounter alive, his case may have the potential to change the tide.

“[If] there’s a judge that says, ‘Since he didn’t know they were police officers, then there can be civil liability here or we can let a jury decide,’”Canon said. “And I don’t see how the judge can say, ‘I’m not gonna bounce this case out right away.’ If something like that happened in the western district of Kentucky or in a Kentucky state court, it would represent a dramatic sea change from the way that any kind of jurist view that I’m aware of has gone for [about] the last 50 years.”

However, according to Canon both federal and state prosecutors are allowed a significant amount of leeway when it comes to deciding which cases they will and will not bring to the courts. Additionally, the culture within American society that allows for police officers to face little but more often than not no punishment whenever they carry out actions most civilians would be prosecuted for makes the odds of a conviction fitting of the crime slimmer. And that is if the case is even taken to court.

“The foundations that we have laid in this country to excuse violence including murder when it’s carried out by police officers against ci-



vilians are so deep that it’s hard for me to even imagine a way that we can unearth those foundations without wiping out the whole structure and starting all over again,” Canon said. “What I mean by that is, when you hear activists talk about defunding the police, or even abolishing police, it’s not to say that there’s not gonna be any law enforcement at all in the United States. It’s that we need to start all over and rethink our entire approach to how we’re doing law enforcement because the police culture in this country is more than just a few bad apples. I mean it’s entirely rotten, from the inside out. [The] United States Congress and other federal officials are willing to write them whatever blank check they want. We’ve been doing that for so long, that you now have a cop culture that pretty much perceives that it can do whatever it wants and anytime that anyone pushes back on it, it’s like an affront to law and order.”

Following the announcement of the grand jury’s decision, protesters in Louisville, New York, Washington, D.C. and other major cities across the nation took to the streets to give voice to their range of emotions in response. Organizations such as the National Bar Association and the NAACP released statements expressing frustration and disappointment with the results of the state’s investigation.

The National Bar Association, the oldest and largest organization connecting mostly African-American attorneys and judges across the nation expressed in a press release that while they urge people of color to not lose all trust in the justice system, “when headline after

headline consistently supports the theory we so desperately want to disprove, it’s beginning to become more and more difficult to make the case that black lives matter to anyone but us.”

University of Kentucky senior Marquita Richardson, shares a similar sentiment. Richardson, who is studying vocal performance, has not yet joined protests following the grand jury’s decision but she did participate in protests this past summer at the height of the pandemic for several southern states.

“There was so much outrage over the injustice that was being dealt to many Americans, many Black men and women at the hands of the police,” Richardson said. “I knew that I wanted to lend my voice to the protests, to the outrage. So I kind of had to overcome my general anxiety about the pandemic. ... It was cathartic and reassuring to be among other people who felt the same way.”

The grand jury’s decision was “unsurprising and disappointing at the same time,” to Richardson. But more than that, it was a corroboration of a grim reality Black Americans grapple with on a daily basis.

“It’s infuriating and antagonizing,” Richardson said. “There are so many people who know that this cannot stand, that this is not justice. That the lack of value of human life does not support the kind of America that everybody wants to salute to. ... I feel less safe now than I did six months ago. Not that our country was any different then, but it’s only been confirmed now through these cases that my life is of no or very little value to my country.”

As far as the federal investigation being conducted by the Department of Justice through the FBI, Richardson is glad they have decided to look into Taylor’s case but her hopes are not high due to the conflicting details she heard in the initial reports compared to what the state investigation found and the tendencies she has seen within the justice system of favoring police in its rulings. However, she does hope that the federal investigation will bring about some change.

“I hope they investigate the tactics that were used and that the Department of Justice lays a framework that prevents these kinds of things from happening again,” Richardson said. “I hope they steer the police department closer to behaving more justly. ... The us versus them culture they have created is literally killing us and dividing our country not just on politics, but the way we see each other as human beings. I have very little hope that America can come back from this. ... Now that I think about it, this is what America has always been. It’s just an echo of what it’s always been. We’re to uproot all of the systems in order to be a place that is actually free. That upholds the dream that all men are created equal.”

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Tongues of Fire

By Beverly Spears



Never Give Up, Never Give In, Never Give Out

The final countdown has begun. This isn't like any other political election in our lifetimes; certainly not for the office of President of the United States. It doesn't feel like a contest between two political parties, but between two polar-opposite ideologies — between two Americas. We hear things like, this is a battle to save democracy and restore morality to the Nation. That's true, as far as it goes. The question is, what is the nature of the so-called morality that we're fighting to restore?

This country has been sorely lacking in morality since its inception. I'm not voting to restore American morality, I'm voting to integrate true morality into every institution, from law enforcement, to education, to the judicial system. I'm voting to make moral decision-making the underpinning in healthcare law, immigration reform, and laws ensuring economic equity and human rights. I'm not voting to save a pseudo-democracy; I'm voting to create democratic systems that for the first time truly represent all the people in a way they never have before.

I don't like using war metaphors, and I try very hard not to bifurcate between right and wrong — good and evil. I know that human nature, the human condition, and the human spirit is far more complex — and because in my heart I hold fast to the existential truth of our ultimate oneness in God. But I am not a highly enlightened Being or a saint, so I only visit that place in my heart. I live in this world — in this reality. In this world there is immorality and then there are situations, events and people where evil is the only word — the only concept that applies.

The evil being perpetrated by the Trump administration must be stopped! It is evil to excuse and condone the relentless murder of Black men, women and children by law enforcement officers, and to call white supremacists, patriots. It is evil to separate Brown children from their parents and lock the young ones in cages for weeks and even months. It is evil to systematically sterilize Brown women being held in ICE detention centers without their knowledge and consent. It is evil to willfully withhold, censor, distort information, and otherwise fail to take actions that almost certainly would have saved the lives of tens of thousands of people who have died from the COVID-19 virus.

Like millions of other people, I've said that I never could have imagined the level of hatred, malevolence, and disregard for human dignity, and human life that we're experiencing under the Trump Administration. I said that I never could have imagined the lightning-fast systematic dismantling of what has proven to be a very fragile democracy.

But what bubble have I been living in that I couldn't imagine that? Over the last four years racism, xenophobia, and violence against Black and Brown people has been tolerated, condoned and celebrated. How could that ever have happened if the ground of America wasn't ripe for it? The murder and brutality against Black men, women and children by Police is prolific, and until recently went virtually unchecked. But the brutalizing of Black people has been happening since slavery.

America maintains a thin veneer of righteousness over a cesspool of violence and dominance. For four years the news media has been filled with statements of righteous indignation on the part of Democrats and other Left-leaning people saying, "This is an attack on our very democracy!" "This is not America!" "This is not who we are." Well of course it's who we are! We are a country that has never atoned for the theft of land, and the genocide of the indigenous people who stewarded that land for millennia. We are a country that has never atoned for the enslavement of 400 thousand Africans upon whose backs this nation was built. We are a country where hard-won amendments ensuring voting rights, women's reproductive rights, equity in housing and healthcare, and environmental protections can obviously be rapidly reversed. We are a country where 30 to 40 million people have lived in poverty for the last two decades. We are a country where 1% of the population holds 99 % of the wealth.

To paraphrase James Baldwin: We carry our history with us. We are our history. We cannot pretend otherwise. Baldwin also said, "Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced." America can and must atone for its original sins by facing them and acknowledging their legacy. This is who we are, but it's not who we have to be going forward.

Electing Joe Biden will not magically end police brutality, poverty, or healthcare disparity. But it will stop our rapid descent into fascism and hell. Under a Biden/Harris administration we still have to fight hard on all fronts, but at least we will not be pushing up against hurricane force winds. The wind will be at our backs.

We still need to vigilantly march in the streets for economic equity, racial justice and human rights. We still need to shout as loud as we can that Black Lives Matter. We need to diligently work to elect the right people to local school boards and city councils as well as to higher offices and hold them absolutely accountable. We must rapidly reform our approach to policing, recognizing the legacy of bias, racism, and abuse of power that is currently integral to that culture. We must restore, expand, and strengthen environmental protections, and for God's sake take our heads out of the sand and face head-on the devastating effect of global warming.

The presidential election will almost certainly not be decided in November, and no matter the outcome, a storm of civil unrest and even violent backlash will almost surely bear down on America. We have to be mentally and spiritually ready to meet this moment. There is no time to despair! There is no time to wallow in hopelessness! The moral imperative of the moment is to rid America of Donald Trump's leadership. If we do not, the consequences to our Country will be devastating now and for generations to come.

The late great John Lewis left us our marching orders: Never give up, never give in, never give out. Keep your eyes on the prize. Together we can redeem the soul of America.

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

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– Jim Bannister, Public School Educator



Tom McGarry for State Representative

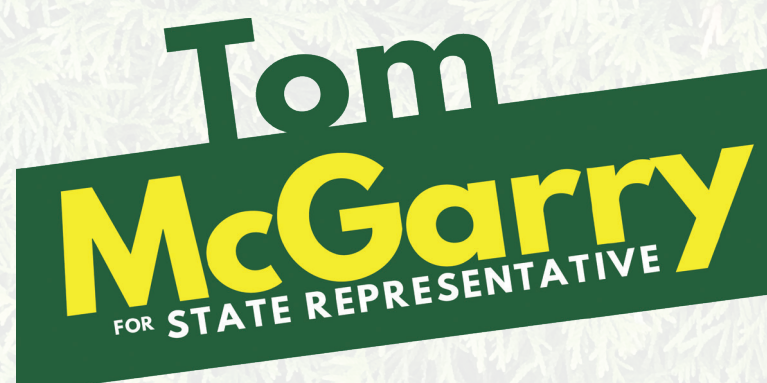
Fire-Commissioner. Housing advocate. Attorney.

Tom is ready to get to work for Spokane and address the serious economic challenges ahead. He’ll work to create more affordable housing and living-wage jobs. And he’ll push for programs we need, like early-childhood learning and investments in broadband internet.

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It’s time for Tom!

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time4tom.com

Malisea “Lisa” Gardner: Back in Spokane

Meet City Council’s New Director of Communications + Community Engagement

Let’s start with a little background on you, where were you born and raised, born and raised?

I was born and raised in Spokane, on the east side, in the East Central neighborhood. My mother was born and raised in Spokane. My grandparents were Levi and Sarah Gardner.

Talk a little bit about your growing up in Spokane.

Growing up in Spokane, it was phenomenal. I will say that. I had a very very rich and healthy childhood growing up in Spokane and I attribute that to my grandparents. My grandmother, in her time, was prominent in the Black community in Spokane and that started before I was born. I have photos of her. She was in all the women’s circles that you can imagine for Black Spokane and when I was born, I kind of fell into that, like in her shadows. I was on her heels, wherever she went, to church, or the beauty salon, east central Community Center, I was right there with her. So, growing up, and watching that and seeing that, was definitely a profound effect on me. And then, of course, it was tragic to lose her, and to lose her in such a violent and scary way. That not only shook our family, but it definitely shook the community.

What impact did your grandmother’s sudden death have on you personally? Did it have an impact on the decisions you made in terms of your future?

You know, I wasn’t too sure. I was 12 years old when she was murdered, and the only thing I can remember was survival, because when someone’s taken from you, an unsolved murder, you’re always constantly in fear because you don’t know who you’re trusting. You don’t know. You have so many unanswered questions and especially as an adolescent, you’re still processing death. And I think for me, it was just kind of surviving the grief, and then also just surviving the city, because our family never knew.

So I think that I just didn’t have a real focus until later on. I went to Ferris High School, and once I was at Ferris, I was really still kind of distraught, and to me, Ferris was not nurturing especially to Black kids back then. They were just kind of like, we were there, but we weren’t nurtured, if that makes any sense. So I had to find my own motivation, and my own motivation was just that I wanted to go to school.

My mom moved to Yakima because she just couldn’t weather being in Spokane anymore because of the tragedy. So my mother made me join AmeriCorps. I am an AmeriCorps alumni. I did Americorp for two years and that was probably the best decision and best path that my mom put me on, because not having the guidance from high school and not knowing what I really wanted to do. One thing I did take out of that was I needed to do something to put me on the path to college. So Americorps helped that.

What did you do, exactly?

I did AmeriCorps in 1994 and 1995. The first year, I completed my service at the south east Community Center in Yakima. Their Community Center is literally like our East Central Community Center, meaning that it was rooted in the Black community there in Yakima, and they have programs for the youth. During the school year, I was a tutor. I tutored in the after school program at the community center, then during the summer, I worked in the parks and in the gym for the summer program. And then the next year I served AmeriCorps at the Department of Corrections in Yakima, so I worked at the county jail and I worked in the booking department for pretrial services.

So after AmeriCorps then what?

Tragically, my mother was murdered in 1996. This time, it wasn’t someone that we didn’t know, it was actually my mother’s boyfriend. It was considered a crime of passion. So, if you can imagine, that was something, of course, that came out of left field and it was almost like deja vu because we had experienced tragedy less than 10 years prior with my grandmother, and now here it is in 1996 and the tragedy is striking our family again with the death of my mother. So, for me, I just I didn’t know at that point what was happening. I didn’t know what to do.

Lucky for me, I had a mentor at the jail. She was my boss, she was who I reported to. She went to Bowie State University in Maryland, and I remember her always telling me



that I should try going to an HBCU. I didn’t know what an HBCU (historically black college) was. The only thing I had heard of was Grambling and Howard and Spellman. Those are the only Black colleges that I knew of.

After my mother was tragically killed, I stopped working, I stopped going to school, I stopped trying, I gave up. The grief was so crippling. It just really kind of took over my life. Probably about six months later, she called and said, you know, I really want you to get out of Washington for one year, please go to school, and she sent me the application (back then it wasn’t an online application). She sent me the application. She paid for my application fee. I applied and I was accepted. That was in 1997.

What was your experience at Bowie State?

I got the Bowie and it was definitely a reverse culture shock. Everyone was Black. Everyone. I mean, when you’re in the financial aid office, when you’re registering for classes, your cooks, your facilitators, your professors, your classmates, everyone was Black. While it was something that I loved, it kind of scared me because I didn’t have what I was familiar with, which were my friends here in Washington. We’re all different colors. My best friends are Native American, they’re Mexican, they’re Asian. So to go to where I didn’t have any culture outside of black, it really was at first kind of like I said a reverse culture shock. So I had to adjust.

It was a love hate. I loved it, you know, because now I’m, taking classes on my Black culture that I was not going to ever get in Washington. So I’m taking African American classes. I’m learning about the reconstruction period after Civil War. I’m learning about more than just Black History Month in Washington. They tell you about Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and that’s it. But I’m learning now about all of the historically Black colleges. I’m learning and reading about WEB Dubois. I’m learning and reading about the Tuskegee Airmen. I’m learning and reading more about my Blackness and my Black culture that I had no clue about and it completely opened me up and is something that was priceless. That was the part that I loved about being at an HBCU. Pledging my sorority. I’m a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated, which this year is our hundred year centennial. So, that is what I took from being at my HBCU and I absolutely loved it.

But I was plagued with homesickness, and I transferred back to Washington, and went to Eastern Washington University where I graduated in 2000 with a Bachelors of Science degree in communication studies.

What led you to that field?

While I was at Bowie, I chose communications because I wanted to do broadcast journalism. In my mind, I thought

I’m gonna be the next Shawn Robinson and I was going to be on the red carpet of Entertainment Tonight or the BET awards. That was my vision. Until I got in front of the camera, and I was I was completely like a deer in headlights. I literally had a physical reaction to being in front of the camera, and people watching me, but I was comfortable being behind the microphone in a small room of a radio studio. So I decided that I didn’t want to do broadcast journalism, as far as television anymore, I wanted to do radio. I did radio at Bowie and then when I transferred back to EWU, I was on the radio station, KEWU, for the remainder of my time there. From there, I learned about communications journalism and public relations, and public relations became my love.

Why public relations?

I loved public relations because I felt that I looked behind the scenes and I was helping to shape public perception and public reputation, and that is something that I absolutely loved doing. But I found myself just not having opportunities in Washington. I would apply for jobs and internships and get a lot of closed doors. After a couple of years of rejection, I decided to move back to Maryland. I moved back to Maryland in 2003. And from there, I was getting opportunity after opportunity after opportunity. I ended up being in Maryland from 2003 to 2016.

Give me an example of some of the things you did?

My first public relations job, I was a campaign manager for United Way. It was a lot of public relations. My largest portfolio was with Johns Hopkins Hospital and Johns Hopkins University. I loved it. I had to manage a \$3 million portfolio with United Way. While I was with United Way, a public relations firm that we worked with recruited me to come work for them. They are the agency on record for the national account for McDonald’s. So, I ended up doing public relations for McDonald’s for three years. That was the best experience ever. I did not know that there was a Black McDonald’s owner operator network, It’s a network of all of the African Americans who own McDonald’s restaurant franchises. This was my first time meeting Black millionaires. I was their publicist and doing public relations for Baltimore, DC, and Northern Virginia.

That’s where I really became more of a consultant because all of these owner operators operate their McDonald’s like small businesses, although it’s under this umbrella franchise. I was consulting them on their day to day operations and that’s when I fell in love with consulting and thought, you know, this is what I want to do. My own consulting, eventually. I didn’t branch out on that immediately, but it planted that seed. After working with McDonald’s, I ended up going to grad school at the University of Maryland from 2011 through 2013.

When did you get back to Washington?

I moved back to Seattle at the end of 2016, early 2017. In 2017 is when I launched my own consulting company, MQG consulting,

So you started your own consulting business? And how did that go? And what did you learn about yourself in owning your own business?

I loved it. I still have it and I still do some consulting. I started it in 2017. I saw that there was an RFP (request for proposals) for a contract with the City of Seattle. The Office of Economic Development was looking for independent consultants that had a specialty in marketing and business development. That was pretty much right up my alley, so I applied. I was awarded a 12 month contract with the City of Seattle to be an independent contractor. In that contract, I was working with small businesses that were falling kind of to the wayside due to construction or due to gentrification, or due to just big shop companies that were coming into Seattle. I was going in as a consultant and helping those small business owners with things such as their business development, their sales, their marketing, their social media. I found that over 50% of the businesses that I assisted needed marketing and social media assistance. I worked with so many different small businesses, primarily businesses of color, and women owned businesses. Anything from barber shops, to beauty salons, cookie shops, ice cream shops, restaurants, all the way to roller derby teams and anything in between.

Continued on Page 25

The Electoral College: A Racist Relic

Twice in the past 20 years, the United States elected a President who did not receive the majority of the vote. On November 3, voters in the United States will once again vote for electors to the Electoral College, who in turn will vote to elect the President of the United States.

We do NOT vote directly for the President in this country, a fact few people realize. The framers of the Constitution did not trust the people to elect a President directly. They felt that power should be reserved for men of means and education: not women, not Blacks, not the poor, not the ‘rabble’. As democratic as the original ideals of our country, the Founding Fathers did not trust the people to directly elect the President.

And, from the beginning, the Electoral College was established to disempower Black voters and enhance the political power of White southerners. Election of the President of the United States by the Electoral College was created to increase the political power of the less populous, enslaving states of the South. That original design has led to increasing systemic inequalities that give White, rural, more affluent voters a disproportionately larger voice in American political decisions.

The ‘Great Compromise’, which was part of the Constitution, counted slaves as three-fifths of a person for purposes of apportioning representation in the US House of Representative. Slaves thereby gave Southern states greater national power in voting representation in Congress by increasing their representation, even though slaves were not given the right to vote. And because slaves could not vote, Southerners knew that their power and voice in selecting the President would be less than the voting power of the North. The Electoral College gave the South inordinate power in national decisions.

So how was this affected when Blacks were allowed to vote? It turns out the system of the Electoral College further disenfranchises Black voters. In Southern states, where White voters outnumber blacks, the winner-takes-all system means the voices of the minority in each state are outvoted and thus suppressed by the majority vote: their votes and voices are not represented on the National stage in the selection of the President.

Aside from the intentional disenfranchisement of Black voters, there are other important problems with the selection of our President by electors, instead of by the people, with the current Presidential election as a good example. Remember, the Electoral College is winner-take-all, with ALL of a state’s electoral votes going to the candidate receiving the majority in that state. States that are considered ‘safely Republican or safely Democratic’ are essentially ignored by the Presidential campaigns. Money and time is spent on “battleground states”.

And it’s not just that we don’t see or hear from candidates, the issues that are not relevant to the rest of the country are ignored in favor of the issues important in the swing states. Eliminate the Electoral College and return the power to the people.

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EDUCATING OUR FUTURE

The Black Lens is recognizing two business owners in Spokane who have dedicated themselves to educating and supporting our children. Our hope is to raise awareness and shine a light on the important work that they both are doing in our community. This month we are focusing on Luc Jasmin III and Parkview Early Learning Center. Last month we focused on Kerra Bower and Little Scholars Early Learning Center.

Parkview Early Learning Center

Give me a little of your background.

I’m first generation Haitian American. I was the only one out of my immediate family to be born in the United States. I was born in Boston, but I didn’t spend my first years in the United States. Although I was born in Boston, I moved to Haiti when I was a baby and I lived there until I was about 5-6 years old, then moved back to the U.S. I grew up in the East and went to college and played collegiate basketball. My ex-wife is from this area and she went to college with me, so that’s what brought me out to Spokane. I was 22 years old.

How was it coming to Spokane?

Coming to Spokane was very difficult. I quickly found out that it was about who you know to get into specific positions. The second thing that was a huge shock to me was that as I grew up, I spent time with every type of culture possible. There were days when I would meet somebody and they were from a place that I had never heard of before. That was a common thing. But coming to Spokane, which is extremely homogeneous, it was rough for me because I was coming with a certain cultural lens that was unfamiliar to the area. A lot of misconceptions took place and it was very difficult trying to get a job.

What brought you in to the work with early learning?

My degree is in Elementary Education. When I was in college, I was always working with youth programs. So, coming here, I knew that was something that I wanted to do. I started in a pre-school downtown, it used to be called The Little Red School House. I thought, I’m going to do this for a little while until I get a job in the school district.

I did get a job in the district and during my time there I noticed that a lot of the kids were already showing signs of dropping out. I was substituting at Glover Middle School and the administration noticed that all of these kids were following this guy around. They put me in a permanent position at Glover and I did that for about a year.

There was one kid in particular, who was a brilliant kid, but he was a kid who came from a low income family and I remember he used to get kicked out of classes just because he wasn’t wearing his pants properly. There was another kid who was never at school. They said, hey you gotta get this kid to school. His dad wasn’t around. His mom was not reliable at all and he was the one that essentially had to figure out how to make money. All the school was seeing at that time was that this kid is not here. So, those are the things that I saw. I did a very short term as a 4th grade teacher, and again I saw these huge disparities. In that 4th grade class, I had kids that were reading at kindergarten level and I had some kids that were at 6 grade level.

All of those experience brought me back to early learning because that’s where those gaps begin and that’s what inspires us today to do the work that we do, to make sure that regardless of what circumstances the kids are brought into, they are not punitively effected and have all of the resources that are possible

What was the catalyst for you starting your business?

Looking back, I think it was just the next step. I was able to be an assistant director for a while, but the next step was having a place where I could work with my team to really put an imprint on the community.

What was the hardest part?

I’m a male in early learning. To a lot of people, especially those who are used to familiarity and used to things looking a specific way, that was a hurdle. One of our goals is to get more men in this field, because a lot of these kids, especially in our Spokane community, don’t have those interactions with men and they’re not going to see that. Even to this day, parents might say, I don’t want this guy to change my child, or I don’t want, this guy to be in a class. So, that’s been a big hurdle.

Financially, it’s also been a huge hurdle. We are asked to do a lot. We saw our state basically shut down due to COVID. But who was still open. A lot of the essential workers are in childcare, supporting those essential workers in the rest of the state. But when we’re looking at funding, it’s not there, so we have to be extremely resourceful.

Have there been any particular challenges for your or your business because you are Black?

One of the things that I would say has been great is that people who have never come to an establishment owned by a Black male before have come, and one of the things that we really pride ourselves in is that when you step into Parkview, you’re gonna see something that mirrors a larger city, where there’s a ton of different cultures. We have an employee from the deep south, you can hear the accent and everything. We have another one who is Muslim from Bosnia. It gives those parents who might not see anything different in this homogenous community, some thing different and that’s been really cool to see. We don’t shy away from talking about differences. We don’t shy away from talking about culture and what that means, and people have responded pretty well. I would say, outside of Parkview, in the community, it’s been tougher due to the racial slurs and run ins with bad actors.

Tell me about Parkview.

When we started Parkview almost seven years ago, we had 13 employees and about 30 kids enrolled, and the building



that I inherited was in rough shape. Since then, we now have 30 employees and upwards of 115 kids in our facility. We have an early headstart program, with children’s home society. We have ECEAP, through the community college, and we’re doing an enrichment program to support virtual learning with our school agers. I think the biggest thing, our pride and joy right now, is that we have added connected services for the kids and families. Meaning, we realized there was a huge transportation barrier for a lot of our families, so with our team we’ve been able to develop partnerships with local agencies. In our building, now our kids can go see a speech therapist. They can go see an occupational therapist, a physical therapist. They have family support coordinators in the building, and we’re still partnering and getting more services there. I’m going to brag a little bit, it’s been huge, because you get a kid who was non-verbal, couldn’t speak at three years old, and you see in just a short period of time, their vocabulary just through the roof. We’re really looking at what does it mean for a kid to be kindergarten ready. That’s who we are.

Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years?

Right now we have several projects going on. I want Parkview to get to a place where it’s running smoothly and we have something that is implementable in other early learning settings. In five years, I want to see early learning that is fully funded and is able to serve our community.

For more information about Parkview Early Learning Center, visit parkviewelc.com, e-mail ParkviewELC@gmail.com or call 509-326-5610.



“Blackest Bus in America” Hits the Road as Part of National Voter Outreach Initiative

Black Voters Matter - BVM (*blackvoters-matterfund.org*) announced a national bus tour as part of its “WE GOT THE POWER” campaign to reach Black voters in the weeks leading up to Election Day. Starting on Saturday, September 26, “The Blackest Bus in America” will make stops in at least 12 states across the South and Midwest to canvass, distribute BVM merchandise, and engage Black voters on the issues impacting their communities. The bus tour will also make stops at community events organized by BVM, including a watch party for the upcoming Presidential debate and a tour of historically Black colleges and universities.

The bus tour is one of many initiatives that fall under BVM’s major voter outreach initiative, WE GOT THE POWER, which also includes radio ads, digital PSAs, virtual events, voter outreach caravans and speaking engagements.

“With less than six weeks until Election Day, we need to continue meeting voters where they’re at — in their own communities,” said LaTosha Brown, co-founder of Black Voters Matter and the 2020-2021 American Democracy Fellow at Harvard University’s Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History. “We’re taking the Blackest Bus in America back on the road to remind Black voters of their power to create change in their communities and to help them use that power at the polls this November.”

“There’s never been a more critical time to step up our outreach,” said Cliff Albright, co-founder of Black Voters Matter and a 2020 recipient of the Open Society Foundation’s Soros Equality Fellowship. “With critical issues like the pandemic, unemployment, and police brutality on the ballot, we need Black voters to show up at the polls in record numbers and hold our



leaders accountable. We’re excited to hit the road on the Blackest Bus in America and continue building Black voting power ahead of Election Day.”

The Blackest Bus in America is a central component of BVM’s work and has been a symbol for BVM’s three-pronged strategy for Black voter engagement: 1) empowering Black voters with community education and support; 2) protecting voters and restoring electoral integrity through outreach and activism; and 3) blanketing communities in Black love and joy.

The Blackest Bus in America will start in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and will make stops in several southern and midwestern states through Election Day. Along the way, it will stop in Cleveland, Ohio on September 29 at a watch party for the upcoming Presidential debate.

From October 2 to October 4, the bus will also make in-person and virtual stops at historically Black colleges and universities in North Carolina, including: Johnson C. Smith University, Bennett College, Shaw University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Winston-Salem State University, Livingstone College, Central University, St. Augustine’s University, Fayetteville State University, and Elizabeth City State University.

Earlier this month, BVM launched radio advertisements and voter outreach caravans to engage Black voters and drive voter turnout. The radio ads, which are airing across multiple states through Monday, November 2, encourage Black voters to “reclaim your power, use your voice, and vote...because we matter.” In addition, BVM is working with its local state partners to support voter outreach caravans,

led by 15-passenger vans that canvass major metropolitan areas in the South and Midwest. In October, it will launch a digital public service announcement campaign instructing voters on how to fill out their ballots. BVM is also continuing to build capacity for local, Black-led voter mobilization groups through training, funding, and staffing support.

BVM’s WE GOT THE POWER campaign consists of power-building events that inform and inspire Black voters to utilize their collective power and address community issues and challenges. This year, BVM held a Virtual Bus Tour with civil rights advocates, policy experts, and health care professionals to engage Black voters in 13 states around the issues impacting their communities. It also included support of the Hip Hop Political Education Summit, BET’s National Black Voter Day, The Black National Convention, among other events.

At the height of the nationwide protests against police violence, BVM also created a Resistance Fund to provide bailout support to the grassroots organizations defending protestors. Through its outreach and voter mobilization work, BVM has reached more than 7 million people and hopes to reach 10 million before Election Day.



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A photograph of a family of three sitting on a grassy lawn in a park. A man, a woman, and a young girl are all wearing white t-shirts and jeans. They are sitting in a circle, smiling and talking to each other. The background is filled with lush green trees and a building is visible in the distance. The overall mood is positive and hopeful.

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<https://www.electrobchase.com>



(Prefers Democrat Party)

1) What do you see as the role of a State Representative as it relates to the local Spokane Community?

As your State Representative, I pledge to represent ALL residents with respect. I believe that everyone deserves a chance to work hard and make a better life for themselves, whether they are 5th generation or a newly arrived American, regardless of how they look, who they love, or what they believe. My opponent says he is running to represent the ‘right of center’. I pledge to represent everyone.

2) Highlight 1-2 of your qualifications that make you the best candidate specifically as it relates to Spokane’s African American community?

I believe that we are enriched by our diversity as individuals and as a community. I pledge to work as a voice for those whose voices have been silenced and ignored. I pledge to reach out to the greater Spokane African American community after my election to listen to the issues my community would like to see carried to Olympia in January.

3) How have you effectively worked with members of the African American community in the Spokane area? What were the outcomes? Please give concrete examples.

I have been a frequent attendee, with my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren at numerous events from many years of Martin Luther King Jr marches to more recent Black Lives Matter and Breonna Taylor rallies, I have felt privileged to be present with my community and to be able to model to my family the value of showing up and standing up for your values.

4) What direct experience do you have addressing issues related to racial equity?

Study, learning, and listening. I attended numerous civil rights events from my early life until now. And I try to continue to study and listen as our recognition of the effects of racism have grown over the years. I pledge to continue to listen and learn.

5) What is your understanding of the term structural racism and how it impacts people of color? What do you see as your role (if any) in addressing it?

Racism has been woven into the fabric of our lives. Our Constitution was written by White men who did not even consider Black slaves full citizens. Those racist



ideas are the basis of today’s laws and cultural norms: racism is baked in. Our community deserves a legislator who will pledge to look at every issue through the lens of structural racism, to see how we can bring greater equity to all.

6) What do you see as the biggest challenge(s) facing African Americans in the Spokane area and what are your thoughts on how, as a State Representative, you can address the challenge(s)?

Especially in District 4, one of the challenges is that African American, Latinos, and other minority groups are small in number individually, and thus, the perception is that the area has a low minority population. As a legislator, I pledge to seek out underrepresented communities to learn of their needs and to be an advocate for their voices.

7) In the past few months, racial justice has become a national topic of conversation. What do you think it will take in order for racial justice to be achieved?

I have mixed-optimism about the future of racial justice in America. On the one hand, as someone who was privileged to hear Dr. King speak 50-some years ago, I feel discouraged that we have come such a short way as a country. That Black Lives Matters even needs to be uttered is sad. That we have yet to learn to provide equal safety and policing to Blacks and Whites in America is shameful. My Black friends today live in fear in MY neighborhood the same way my Black friends always have. It just makes it hard to see the progress we have made as a country in dealing with a racist past.

That said, I feel great optimism seeing our community has mobilized over the past weeks. Because there is so much more to do.

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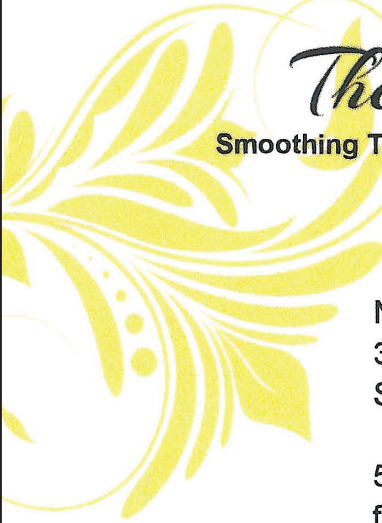
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https://www.mikevolz.com



(Prefers Democratic Party)

1) What do you see as the role of a State Representative as it relates to the local Spokane Community?

My job is to reach out to constituents and community leaders in the Spokane area to learn and listen to issues impacting their lives, work to find solutions, and advocate for those changes in the Legislature. My job is to figure out what those barriers to success are and fight for those who are left out of the system.

2) Highlight 1-2 of your qualifications that make you the best candidate specifically as it relates to Spokane’s African American community?

As a white male, I am aware of my own privilege and power within the current system of white supremacy. I want to use my own privilege to raise up the experiences of others and advocate for change to break down the systems of oppression. I also have experience working to advance equity and inclusion. As a teacher, I worked to change the school curriculum to reflect students’ identities, fought against a discipline system, and worked to expand extra-curricular opportunities for African American students by creating civic clubs including mock trial, youth legislature, and a DC educational trip. I also worked on health care policy at WA Health Benefit Exchange to make health insurance more affordable for populations that are underrepresented, including the African American community.

3) How have you effectively worked with members of the African American community in the Spokane area? What were the outcomes? Please give concrete examples.

After spending most of my career teaching in the Tri-Cities, I moved back home to Spokane last year. The pandemic hit and I volunteered daily throughout the spring and summer to feed families in need. I’ve also taken steps to reach out to members of the African American community to learn more about issues in Spokane. I’ve also talked about conducting voter registration outreach with Councilmember Betsy Wilkerson.

4) What direct experience do you have addressing issues related to racial equity?

I actively worked to change the school curriculum to be culturally responsive, including authors of different races and identities that intersect with race. I also changed parent-teacher conferences to be student led conferences, which changed from punitive conferences to empowering students and families to advocate for their education outcomes. I’ve also advocated for implicit bias training for higher education faculty as part of a student bill of rights. I also advocated for changes to the school discipline system that reinforced the school to prison pipeline and over policing of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Personally, I have attended several



racial equity trainings and look at policy through a racial equity lens.

5) What is your understanding of the term structural racism and how it impacts people of color? What do you see as your role (if any) in addressing it?

Structural racism is a system that includes political, economic, cultural, and historical advantages that benefit Whites while producing adverse outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. My role as State Representative is to break down the system of structural racism, especially in public policy, to make sure everyone has a fair shot at economic security. This also means understanding my privilege as a white male and using that to advocate for others. This means changing policies so they don’t systematically advantage Whites and a redistribution of equity.

6) What do you see as the biggest challenge(s) facing African Americans in the Spokane area and what are your thoughts on how, as a State Representative, you can address the challenge(s)?

Some of the biggest challenges facing African Americans in the Spokane area are a chronic underinvestment in education, healthcare, housing, and living-wage jobs. It also includes a criminal justice system that disproportionately impacts African Americans. As State Representative, I will work to invest in education, healthcare, jobs, and housing, especially in African American communities and decrease our reliance on law enforcement. I will also work to advocate for policies that restrict the use of excessive or deadly force by police and increase police accountability.

7) In the past few months, racial justice has become a national topic of conversation. What do you think it will take in order for racial justice to be achieved?

For racial justice to be achieved, we need to break down the system of white supremacy that is a part of every institution in our country. This means we need to right historical inequities and change systems so that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are not disadvantaged so that Whites can get ahead. This includes changing policies in our criminal justice system, housing, health care, and education system.

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WA State Representative - Leg. Dist. 6

Jenny Graham

Position 2

Tom McGarry

(Prefers Republican Party)

No
Response.

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(Prefers Democratic Party)

1) What do you see as the role of a State Representative as it relates to the local Spokane Community?

Public officials have a duty to listen to and represent all the people in their community. Our priorities must include access to education, jobs, and healthcare for Spokane. Budget cuts will be inevitable. We must ensure that these cuts do not disproportionately affect those least able to contend with them.

2) Highlight 1-2 of your qualifications that make you the best candidate specifically as it relates to Spokane’s African American community?

I understand that I am a product of white privilege. With that understanding comes my awareness that all social problems, whether in housing inequity, health care, criminal justice, or education, stem from inequities in economic opportunities. These have disproportionately affected members of communities of color. We are far from being an equitable society--a fact that has been laid bare by the past four years, both here and in the other Washington. I pledge to always work towards racial justice and racial equity. Let’s make this the America we dream that it could be.

3) How have you effectively worked with members of the African American community in the Spokane area? What were the outcomes? Please give concrete examples.

As an attorney, I have worked towards increasing housing availability for all income levels, ensuring compliance with all Fair Housing laws. In my Fire Commissioner role, I have worked to make sure that all members of the district are treated fairly and looked for ways to increase minority employment and opportunities. When I was Board President of the West Central Community Neighborhood I saw the need of people from all backgrounds and encouraged participation and projects that benefited everyone.

4) What direct experience do you have addressing issues related to racial equity?

My innate sense of fairness drove me to seek a BSW degree in Social Work and a Bachelors in Social Science. My path has always been in the direction if racial equity and inclusivity. Although I have limited experience in directly addressing issues related to racial equity, I am 100% committed to doing so.

5) What is your understanding of the term structural racism and how it impacts people of color? What do you see as your role (if any) in addressing it?



Structural racism is our current society in which a person of color does not have the same access to education, business opportunities, healthcare and other opportunities afforded to some. Addressing structural racism begins with admitting that there is a problem. It is incumbent upon lawmakers to work with communities of color, to listen, and to enact legislation that addresses these issues.

6) What do you see as the biggest challenge(s) facing African Americans in the Spokane area and what are your thoughts on how, as a State Representative, you can address the challenge(s)?

Job losses, educating children, providing child care, limited public transportation, and health care logistics disproportionately affect communities of color which has been made worse by the pandemic. The African American community has a disproportionate number of persons arrested and convicted. African Americans in Spokane appear to have limited access to legislators. I will seek input from affected communities to ensure legislation benefits and does not harm people of color.

7) In the past few months, racial justice has become a national topic of conversation. What do you think it will take in order for racial justice to be achieved?

Slavery, the Ku Klux Klan, Jim Crow, separate but equal, etc, demonstrate that historically black lives have not mattered historically as much as white lives. Electing an overtly racist President and the support he enjoys shows that we have a long way to go before achieving racial justice. Ramping up hate crime enforcement, enforcing discrimination laws, restructuring law enforcement, and changing school curricula are a few things that must be done. We need to get back to emphasizing community policing, rather than police militarization.

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Spokane County Commissioner District 1

Josh Kerns

Ted Cummings

(Prefers Republican Party)

1) Outline the primary difference(s) between you and your opponent?

I am committed to creating an environment that encourages job growth and opportunity for all of our citizens. I have also worked to bring more transparency to County Government to give our citizens more insight in how their tax dollars are spent, a concept that has shown to be widely supported by voters.

2) Despite Spokane’s best efforts racial disparities persist in the Spokane Jail. What are your thoughts on why the disparities still remain and what do you see as the role of the County Commissioners in addressing the disparities?

I believe a driving factor is that law enforcement responds to where calls for service are reported. We see higher calls for service in areas of high poverty. There are generational factors that have held many people of color in poverty.

As far as the disparities in the jail, I would point out that commissioners have no say in who is held in the jail. We don’t arrest, we don’t charge, we don’t prosecute, we don’t defend, we don’t determine bail, we don’t determine if someone is released on their own recognizance, and we don’t sentence.

Laws should be applied equally to everyone. If you are breaking the law, that should initiate a contact with law enforcement. Not the color of your skin.

Commissioners need to bring community members, including other elected officials and stakeholders together to find solutions, knowing many solutions will have to come from agencies the commissioners do not control.

3) Please give one concrete example of a time that you applied an equity lens to a decision that you had to make and what the outcome was?

A few years ago, when evaluating adding an additional citizen representative to the Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council. We looked at not only what viewpoints and expertise the council had, but what viewpoints and expertise we didn’t have. I voted to appoint the first person of color to serve in that capacity.

4) A budget demonstrates the priorities of a city. What are examples of priorities in Spokane’s County budget that demonstrate a commitment to equity?

One of the most successful programs we fund in the criminal justice system is the Head Start to Construction Trades. It is a program that trains inmates at Geiger Correctional Facility in construction trades. This is a way to provide real life skills to the inmates and give them an opportunity to find a job and provide for themselves and their family upon release. Understanding that not everyone is beginning in the



same place, this helps lift people out of poverty and reduce recidivism.

5) Should any part of the county budget be shielded from cuts? And if so, which area(s)?

Any area that is mandated by the State of Washington to be funded by Spokane County, which is about 80% of our overall budget.

6) Do you feel that Spokane has a housing crisis? Why? Why not? What are your thoughts on how to balance the competing needs of landlords with those of tenants?

We have a housing crisis driven by the lack of housing supply in our community. Through misguided land use policy from the State, mainly the Growth Management Act, housing prices have gone up, which has driven rental prices up. We need to allow more units of housing to be built at all price points in our community.

7) What policy changes or investments (if any) do you feel are necessary to ensure a long term recovery from the impact of COVID-19, particularly in communities of color?

We need to continue our commitment to funding the Health District’s COVID response and ensuring food security. We have given millions of dollars to both of these important goals. We will continue to help our struggling small businesses stay open and keep as many people as possible employed during these difficult times.

8) The country seems to be polarized right now on the issue of race and racial justice. What role (if any) can county commissioners play in ensuring that Spokane county is viewed as a welcoming place for people of color?

County Commissioners must continue to make sure we are a community that offers opportunities for all citizens to find good paying jobs, quality schools for their children, a high quality of life, and outdoor recreation. We must create a community where everyone feels safe to live.

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(Prefers Democratic Party)

1) Outline the primary difference(s) between you and your opponent?

I believe that elected officials should represent every citizen equally and ensure every demographic in the community feels safe, welcomed and respected, I will do that, the current commissioner is actively doing the opposite, attacking Union labor and not speaking out against hate groups and armed militia walking our streets. I want to serve the entire community not wealthy developers, special interests, and corporations.

2) Despite Spokane’s best efforts racial disparities persist in the Spokane Jail. What are your thoughts on why the disparities still remain and what do you see as the role of the County Commissioners in addressing the disparities?

I am disappointed and appalled at the state of race relations in our county and country. We need elected officials to work with the leadership of affected groups to partner a continued path forward. Commissioners need to allocate monies toward prevention, diversion, and treatment programs to help keep citizens out of jail or from returning to jail.

3) Please give one concrete example of a time that you applied an equity lens to a decision that you had to make and what the outcome was?

As a union representative, I help to develop and negotiate collective bargaining agreements. I am tasked with delivering a contract that protects and compensates the diverse interest groups that make up my membership, equitably. I recently settled a long-term sick leave agreement that allows a generous amount of leave for those who use it and additional benefits that recognize those employees that do not use their leave benefit.

4) A budget demonstrates the priorities of a city. What are examples of priorities in Spokane’s County budget that demonstrate a commitment to equity?

Mental Health and Parks Capital Improvements expenditures benefit everyone.

5) Should any part of the county budget be shielded from cuts? And if so, which area(s)?

Homelessness prevention should be shielded from cuts, demand for money from this fund will surely increase with the economic damage done from the Pandemic.

6) Do you feel that Spokane has a housing crisis? Why? Why not? What are your thoughts on how to balance the



competing needs of landlords with those of tenants?

Absolutely Spokane has a housing crisis and it is only going to worsen without an aggressive response. I appreciate the risk and investment of landlords but respecting the rights of tenants is essential. Increasing inventory of affordable homes and rental units is necessary to bring parity between the parties.

7) What policy changes or investments (if any) do you feel are necessary to ensure a long term recovery from the impact of COVID-19, particularly in communities of color?

I think that all small business and particularly businesses owned by people of color are going to need all the financial support the state and county can muster to weather and rebuild from the storm of this pandemic. Building affordable housing using efficient, green, and sustainable materials while using economies of scale to keep costs down is one of my primary interests. Homes and apartments needed to be planned with efficient modes of transportation, along with schools and shopping and green spaces.

8) The country seems to be polarized right now on the issue of race and racial justice. What role (if any) can county commissioners play in ensuring that Spokane county is viewed as a welcoming place for people of color?

The county commissioner has the opportunity to lead by example and reach out to every constituency group and extend a sincere offer to help develop and bring to fruition a vibrantly healthy and welcoming county. A Commissioner has a duty to appoint qualified and representative persons to boards and committees who share in a belief of inclusion and a commitment to the ideal that we are stronger together.

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Spokane County Commissioner District 2

Mary Kuney

(Prefers Republican Party)

1) Outline the primary difference(s) between you and your opponent?

I'm honored to be your current County Commissioner, building our community for the future. Prior to that, I was Chief Deputy Auditor for Spokane County and have been a Certified Public Accountant since 1993. I was a Washington State Auditor for ten years, including two years as Auditor in Charge of the Spokane County Audit, ensuring the County followed all regulations. I also started two successful small businesses.

For over 30 years, my volunteer work has focused on at-risk youth in our community. This includes currently being a Hutton Settlement Board Member, and formerly on the Boys & Girls Club Board.

2) Despite Spokane's best efforts racial disparities persist in the Spokane Jail. What are your thoughts on why the disparities still remain and what do you see as the role of the County Commissioners in addressing the disparities?

We must invest in the most impacted communities, in areas such as education, and jobs to help fix disparities that persist across our criminal justice system, and jail. Fortunately, there are real solutions, such as Head Start to Construction that is lifting many into family wage jobs. This is a program supported by Spokane County and run by the Associated General Contractors. My family has been a leading contractor in Spokane for 90 years, providing hundreds of family wage union jobs. Our workforce statewide is 37% people of color and 18% women. Our current crew on the Post Street Bridge in Spokane is 28% people of color and 31% women, all of which vastly exceed the required hiring goals set by the State.

3) Please give one concrete example of a time that you applied an equity lens to a decision that you had to make and what the outcome was?

After college I lived in San Francisco for three years. In 1988, I performed the audit for the AIDS Walk of San Francisco. This was a time when many people were afraid that you could contract the AIDS virus by just being around a gay person. I was the only one willing to go and perform the audit in their offices and I remember how appreciative they were that I saw beyond the false perceptions. My work with the staff at the AIDS Walk really made an impression on me to learn from others and the importance of empathy. I continue to use those lessons today in my work as Commissioner and as a Hutton Settlement Board member.

4) A budget demonstrates the priorities of a city. What are examples of priorities in Spokane's County budget that demonstrate a commitment to equity?

We're making a major investment in equity with the building of the Mental Health Crisis Stabilization Center. This center will provide a diversion from the criminal justice system into behavior health programs. It's my intention to maintain funding for the Spokane Regional Health District, as they work to protect our entire community and focus on health equity.

5) Should any part of the county budget be shielded from cuts? And if so, which area(s)?



In times of budget cuts all areas need to be analyzed and prioritized by the County prior to making reductions. We must fund mandated services first and then look at what is left. Especially in this time of COVID-19, the Health District is one department that should not be cut, as they are critical to the health of our community. I hope to not have to make any budget cuts to necessary services.

6) Do you feel that Spokane has a housing crisis? Why? Why not? What are your thoughts on how to balance the competing needs of landlords with those of tenants?

Yes, Spokane has a housing crisis. Vacancy is at an all-time low. I am currently meeting weekly with the Mayor and Council President of Spokane and the Mayor of Spokane Valley, to develop a regional response to homelessness and the housing needs in our community.

7) What policy changes or investments (if any) do you feel are necessary to ensure a long term recovery from the impact of COVID-19, particularly in communities of color?

Through CARES funding, the County has made investments in food security, rent assistance, and help for non-profits and small businesses. This includes grants, providing PPE, and other economic development. We want to keep people from becoming homeless, or economic disaster. One of the best ways we can do that is to invest in jobs and the ability for our businesses to keep people employed.

With the uncertainties of the new school year, I reached out to all local school superintendents asking where the County could help. We have now invested CARES funding for technology to support remote learning, day camps so working parents could continue to work and support their families, and PPE for schools. Getting kids back in schools when it is safe to do so is important for equity to make sure that children do not get further behind.

8) The country seems to be polarized right now on the issue of race and racial justice. What role (if any) can county commissioners play in ensuring that Spokane county is viewed as a welcoming place for people of color?

As commissioners we need to ensure that equity remains part of the conversation and doesn't fall by the wayside. It's also necessary to move beyond simply discussing equity by applying an equity lens when making investments and other policy decisions.

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David Green

(Prefers Democratic Party)

1) Outline the primary difference(s) between you and your opponent?

I believe that county government should focus on "people first". The actions of our county commissioners indicate that they feel differently. For example, CARES Act funding provided to the county for COVID-19 has been disproportionately spent to date on businesses. My priority would be to take care of people first, through housing security and food security. While my opponent and I are both accountants, I like to think that in this race I'm "The CPA with a ♥".

2) Despite Spokane's best efforts racial disparities persist in the Spokane Jail. What are your thoughts on why the disparities still remain and what do you see as the role of the County Commissioners in addressing the disparities?

Racial disparities persist in the Spokane Jail because there is still implicit racism and bias in county government. The commissioners recently adopted a watered-down document on guiding principals when making decisions in the criminal justice system. That tells me that our current commissioners don't "get it" with respect to implicit bias and institutional racism --- issues that all elected officials should be more aware of. I support proposals from Smart Justice Spokane that call upon county government to make significant changes in how we address criminal justice issues.

3) Please give one concrete example of a time that you applied an equity lens to a decision that you had to make and what the outcome was?

I'm on a national board which has a "hall of fame". Straight white males are the typical honorees, because the profession that the board draws its members from has historically been dominated by those individuals. During my three years on the board, I've worked to increase the number of women being recognized. I've also been vocal on the need for the board to consist of more diverse members. I'm fully supporting the organization's current efforts on diversity, equity and inclusion in the profession.

4) A budget demonstrates the priorities of a city. What are examples of priorities in Spokane's County budget that demonstrate a commitment to equity?

I don't think the budget from the current commissioners demonstrates a commitment to equity. Smart Justice proposals were put forward in the 2014 commissioner race by then-candidate Mary Lou Johnson and our current commissioners have had the opportunity (but no apparent desire) to address the issues. The commissioners (including my opponent) in 2017 cut (for the 2018 county budget) \$400,000 in annual unrestricted funding of our Health District --- and have frozen that amount annually since then without any adjustment for inflation.

A budget that would demonstrate a commitment to equity would incorporate Smart Justice proposals and would have more robust support of our Health District. Even the county's CARES Act funding does not demonstrate a commitment to equity as it is less focused on housing security and food security (areas that disproportionately impact the BIPOC community) than it is on distributing funds to businesses (which are disproportionately owned by the non-BIPOC community).

5) Should any part of the county budget be shielded from cuts? And if so, which area(s)?



The core functions of any county are criminal justice (countywide), and in unincorporated areas of the county public safety (police services, provided through the Sheriff's office) and road maintenance. And I would add to that the restoration of funding of our Health District back to 2011 inflation-adjusted levels. Core county functions and the Health District should be protected against cuts, if possible.

6) Do you feel that Spokane has a housing crisis? Why? Why not? What are your thoughts on how to balance the competing needs of landlords with those of tenants?

Clearly we have a countywide housing crisis. It was disappointing to see the current commissioners "pass" on the concept of creating a durable countywide funding source dedicated to affordable housing (HB1590). The commissioners, along with elected officials from Spokane and Spokane Valley, should convene a meeting of organizations representing tenant and landlord interests to work through the longer term aspects of our housing crisis.

7) What policy changes or investments (if any) do you feel are necessary to ensure a long term recovery from the impact of COVID-19, particularly in communities of color?

Our current commissioners appear to be more focused on protecting the interests of business owners (which are disproportionately non-BIPOC individuals) during the pandemic. And, they've also funded a tourism campaign with CARES Act money (an example of business before people). I'm a firm believer in science and a supporter of our Health District's efforts to control and minimize the impact of COVID-19. Long term funding by the county of our Health District is key to protecting the health of all county residents, but particularly so to communities of color. Continued housing security and food security is of utmost importance, and once the pandemic is under control continued investment by the federal government in economic support can slowly bring our country back to normal.

8) The country seems to be polarized right now on the issue of race and racial justice. What role (if any) can county commissioners play in ensuring that Spokane county is viewed as a welcoming place for people of color?

Our commissioners should be comfortable in feeling uncomfortable with respect to racism and racial equity issues. That's the first step in understanding that a problem exists. Commissioners should seek advice from the BIPOC community (and listen to that advice) instead of adopting watered-down proposals that don't adequately address the issue.

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Superintendent of Public Instruction

Chris Reykdal

Maia Espinoza

1) What do you see as the fundamental difference(s) between you and your opponent?

I believe in the life-changing value of public education, and that’s why I’ve devoted my career to bettering our public schools. As Superintendent, I see every day how institutional racism in our school systems create an opportunity gap between white students and students of color. I’m the only Democrat in this non-partisan election. By her own admission, my opponent is a pro-Trump Republican school privatizer, who believes segregation-affirming school voucher programs should come to Washington.

2) Talk about how COVID-19 is impacting Washington’s public schools and where you see things going in the future?

COVID-19 has laid bare long-existing systemic inequities in K–12 education. Public health now necessitates a more flexible education landscape, with access to broadband service and internet-connected devices at the center of student learning. Unaffordability of broadband service has become a barrier to a child’s ability to even enter a classroom, further widening existing opportunity gaps. Our number one priority is returning students and educators to in-person instruction when it is safe and sustainable.

3) What do you see as the top challenge(s) currently facing public Schools in Washington State and what qualifies you to address those challenges?

Washington needs a high-quality, accessible public education system that sees race, language, and individual student interests as strengths and assets. Our top challenge is making sure COVID-19 doesn’t slow our progress towards this goal. I’ve led Washington’s school system through the pandemic with this goal in mind, guided by my public education experience as a classroom teacher, budget administrator, school board member, and Superintendent. I’m ready, prepared, and the best qualified candidate to continue addressing these challenges.

4) Give examples of how you have specifically engaged with the African American community in the past.

As Superintendent I’ve engaged the Tacoma Black Collective with direct dialogue, engaged the newly formed Federal Way Black Collective, and embraced intentional practices of building an OSPI team better reflecting African American representation. OSPI assembles taskforces with specific requests to recruit African American leaders who are leading education advocacy groups, or who are recommended to us by the Commission on African American Affairs. I’ve been blessed to work in education for over 20 years, and I’ve learned from African American education leaders I’ve worked under and with.

5) What do you see as the primary need(s) of African American youth and youth of color in our public schools and how can your office address those needs?

Every educator needs ongoing job-embedded training on racial equity and anti-racist practices. Step one is transforming the workforce, and my office partners with school districts across the state to implement these policies. We need ethnic studies embedded in every subject, not just stand-alone courses. We also need to change school funding to send more resources to communities most in need, and provide universal connectivity for all families as a basic education right. Your zip code shouldn’t determine your access to basic education supports.

6) Students of color continue to be disproportionately impacted by discipline rates and arrests in our local schools. What needs to be done that it is not currently being done to address this issue?



In 2018 our office demolished outdated student discipline rules from the 1970s. Our new guidance aims to end race-based and ability-based disproportionality in discipline, and reduce learning lost because of discipline. The new rules emphasize positive behavior supports for students, requires greater student and family engagement, and mandates transparency from school districts through data. Districts are implementing these changes, and our office is monitoring implementation and measuring the impact on students of color.

7) What concrete actions do you see yourself taking to represent and engage parents of color?

Creating parent advisory groups for all dual language programs, which lifts up parents of color in particular. Creating a universal right to accessible technology for all families as part of basic education funding, which empowers more parents of color to walk alongside their children’s learning and provide more consistent access to educators. I want to continue building ethnic studies in all our schools and subject areas, with direct input from parents in each unique community.

8) How can Spokane Schools recruit, hire and retain a more diverse workforce?

Any school district looking to build a more diverse workforce must first examine their own culture and policies. It starts by dismantling structural racism embedded in most job descriptions and hiring practices. Spokane and others also need an intentional grow-your-own program and policy. Our students and support staff are the best opportunity we have to develop talent in our community to serve our community. We have model districts putting these policies into practice.

9) If you could change one thing about Washington’s Public Schools what would it be?

I’d transform the school calendar to recognize some students need more time, more supports, and more flexibility in demonstrating proficiency. One-size fits all doesn’t work. I’ve also published an open letter to the Biden-Harris ticket outlining 10 critical changes necessary to build a foundation for a truly equitable and outstanding public education system. I hope you’ll read the letter online at www.ChrisReykdal.org

10) What policies would you support to increase student achievement?

Our students deserve multiple pathways to success. In my first term, we delinked high stakes tests from graduation and we replaced them with more appropriate graduation pathways. We honor career and technical education equally with traditional academic learning. We must enhance support services – counselors, nurses, mental health supports, and more that are embedded with culturally responsive practices. Student achievement grows when students feel safe, healthy, and a sense of genuine belonging.

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1) What do you see as the fundamental difference(s) between you and your opponent?

My opponent does a lot of talking about equity and opportunity, but when push comes to shove, Superintendent Reykdal is responsible for maintaining the barriers which keep kids from accessing the education they are constitutionally entitled to. I have experience in closing opportunity gaps, improving student outcomes, and helping lift up communities often forgotten in public education.

2) Talk about how COVID-19 is impacting Washington’s public schools and where you see things going in the future?

School closures brought on by COVID have simply exposed the long-standing inequities in Washington’s public schools. By embracing innovation and bold solutions in the classroom we can right the ship. In the short term, why are private academies opening for a fee while kids who can’t afford it are stuck at home, attending classes online at best. It seems the cure for COVID when it comes to our schools is money. We’re currently seeing the privatization of our public schools while kids who need public education most are again left out. As we move forward from COVID, technology should remain an undercurrent in our students’ learning and we should work to maintain parental engagement. These are just a couple of positive ways we can use the current situation to improve public education and student outcomes in our state.

3) What do you see as the top challenge(s) currently facing public Schools in Washington State and what qualifies you to address those challenges?

Now is our chance to reimagine a better education system for Washington. We are operating with an outdated and ineffectual model that breeds inequity. I’m not a career politician. I have served in government, but I am proudest of running an education-focused non-profit aimed at getting people involved in their government, working as a teacher and, most of all, being a mom to two kids in public schools. I had my first daughter as a single teen mom, she walked with me in my college graduation. We need to better support single parents and working families because right now we’re leaving them to figure everything out on their own.

4) Give examples of how you have specifically engaged with the African American community in the past.

I served on the OSPI Student Data Task Force as part of the Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, where we were tasked with helping communities of color get access to the same opportunities. Much of my work has been aimed at addressing the inequities in education in our state. I pledge to do the same as Superintendent.

5) What do you see as the primary need(s) of African American youth and youth of color in our public schools and how can your office address those needs?

Education funding mechanisms in our state are misaligned. School funding is over reliant on local levies, resulting in massive geographic funding inequities. These issues disproportionately impact children of color. We can do so much better. I want to see children who don’t have computers at home still have access to school. I want to get the kids testing below grade level caught up, and then for those students who are ready for a bigger challenge, I want to promote programs like Running Start to give all students a chance at a college degree. From what I’ve seen and experienced, the only thing my opponent has done in the last four years, is ensure an outdated and inequitable system continues.

6) Students of color continue to be disproportionately impacted by discipline rates and arrests in our local schools. What needs to be done that it is not



currently being done to address this issue?

We face real issues of bias and inequity in Washington’s public schools. I have experienced and witnessed these injustices that persist in our schools and allowing them to continue is unacceptable. In addition to providing the necessary cultural competency trainings, tools, and resources, we must ensure parents and students have a choice in their education. When students and parents are empowered to have a say in their schooling, and educational leaders understand existing inequities we will cut discipline and arrest rates significantly.

7) What concrete actions do you see yourself taking to represent and engage parents of color?

I am the candidate for this office which will represent and engage parents of color, something I don’t feel has been yet achieved in our state. If elected, I would become the first woman of color elected to statewide office here. The current administration is centralizing control and taking key decisions away from parents and local leadership, leading to greater inequity in our schools. We must bring parent voices into the foreground. We know our kids and our communities best. We also know that there are enough educational resources in our state to effectively address the ongoing disparities that plague our schools and students if only resolving these issues were priorities.

8) How can Spokane Schools recruit, hire and retain a more diverse workforce?

I will work with local leaders to create innovative ways of retaining a diverse workforce. One example of this was when I worked to pass legislation that incentivised bilingual students to become teachers in their communities, after 5 years their student loans would be forgiven. We can find solutions like this one to ensure our workforces is as diverse as our students!

9) If you could change one thing about Washington’s Public Schools what would it be?

I want to reimagine public education in our state, but if I could only pick one thing to change, I would adjust funding mechanisms to ensure all students are receiving the education they deserve. With an overreliance on local levies many school districts are left wanting, while our students fall behind.

10) What policies would you support to increase student achievement?

We should assess student learning so we know where students are, especially considering the disruptions of COVID. We should implement personalized learning plans for every student and better utilize education technology to support teachers in doing their jobs more effectively. I also plan to provide more access to extra curricular programs which students of color are less likely to be able to participate in resulting in lasting inequities.

Contact
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We are currently seeking additional skilled technicians in the Spokane & surrounding areas. Candidates with an aptitude in technical trades & background in field service or heavy machinery are preferred.

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EMPLOYMENT & BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES



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Passages Family Support, an outpatient mental health center, is recruiting for two clinical staff:

Master’s level therapist and Adult Peer Specialist.

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The *Master’s level therapist* must have a master’s degree in social services or be within 6 months of graduation and have experience providing mental health services to adults.

The *Adult Peer Specialist* must be a peer of mental health services and understand the basics of Recovery.

Submit your resume to smaike@passagesfs.org or contact Shirley Maike at 509.892.9241 for more information.

Spokane Black Business Directory



▶ **Search.**

▶ **Find.**

▶ **Support Black Business.**

Welcome to:

BlackSpokane.com

The Carl Maxey Center is excited to share Spokane's Black Business Directory at www.BlackSpokane.com. The businesses are listed in alphabetical order and searchable by category.

This is just the beginning. Our goal is to eventually make this a comprehensive snapshot of Black Spokane, including Black businesses, organizations, professionals, churches and events.

If you are an African American professional or a business that is at least 51% Black owned and would like to be included in the directory, please contact the Carl Maxey Center at carlmaxeycenter@gmail.com.





Spokane

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Spokane Regional Labor Council

510 S Elm Street, Suite 1
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slrc@spokanelabor.org
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OUR VOICES

Black Criticism and Politics of the ‘Black Beard’

By **Brittanyana Pierro**

With Kamala Harris’s acceptance of the VP nomination, there has been great speculation of her role as the first ever African American woman to possibly hold the coveted office of the vice presidency. The initial optics of her newfound claim to fame are fairly good in appearance. Her actual approval rating is moderately high as a VP nominee right now, comparing both sides of the two party line. However, as much as her presence in the political seat brings about a vision of innovation and progression, many people do not feel that is what her policymaking has historically represented.

Harris’s nomination brought about a conversation on the ethics of what I like to call Political Blackface. Political Blackface or the politics of a ‘Black Beard’ can be described as a white politician, or group of white politicians, using a Black person as a metaphorical shield or spokesperson. A Samuel L. Jackson in Django if you will, to push a political agenda through the guises of identity politics. Politicians trying to garner the support of marginalized and progressive populations must prove they support those demographics, and who better to do that than someone that blends in with said communities.

Many Americans, including those of Harris’ same political leaning, hold harsh criticisms of her former days as a district attorney in San Francisco, California. These criticisms often revolve around her historical affiliation with the police and

for policies that she defended that disproportionately effected Black and Brown residents of her city. Along with this, Harris has received criticism relevant to the rising awareness of police brutality, since in 2015 she opposed a bill that would mandate her district attorney’s office perform extra investigation into shootings that involved police officers. Essentially, to many people, left leaning and not so, Harris is revered as a ‘top cop’.

A New York Times opinion piece titled ‘Kamala Harris was not a progressive Prosecutor’ by Lara Bazelon gives several examples of the policies Harris backed that would no longer be considered within reason by the majority of American progressives. This includes opposition to the legalization of marijuana up until 2018, and extended support of the death penalty.

“Ms. Harris also championed state legislation under which parents whose children were found to be habitually truant in elementary school could be prosecuted, despite concerns that it would disproportionately affect low-income people of color,” Bazelon stated.

Questions of the reasoning behind Harris’ decisions in these circumstances is where speculation of the nature of individual political ambitions lies. For myself, I can’t assume anything beyond what I’ve seen from politicians for the majority of my life, which seems to be a lively dialogue between unhinged wealth, petty attempts at reframing the narratives of white supremacy and a secret addiction to the feeling of power – or not so secret as of late.

There is somewhat of a discrepancy in the way the general public chooses to scrutinize our political leaders when they make mistakes. For instance, there is no real differentiation, in my opinion, between Harris’ politics and that of her running mate, Joe Biden. The key difference is the criticisms they both actively face and the level of scrutiny that Harris receives in comparison to Biden.

In reality, Biden has had a long and lingering history with racist politics, starting with his opposition to multiple integration laws during his first term in Senate in the early 1970s. He was a huge proponent of mandatory sentencing in the 90s, and unsurprisingly backed the death penalty, as well as the expansion of private prisons up until the early 2000s. But in his Senate infancy, Biden was described in a NY Magazine article as “a caricature of a white northern liberal”, and his missteps are often overlooked or bypassed under the guise of ‘it’s the best we can do’ or he’s ‘just another old white politician’.

So, the question that comes to mind then, at least for me, revolves around accountability. If we hold our politicians accountable, why are we more willing to scrutinize the politicians, like Harris, that still face a greater level of oppression? Why is it that Biden gets the luxury of American complacency, but Harris receives only a miniscule amount of the same favor? Where do we draw the line with our expectations of accountability for Black politicians, and why is that the line is higher for our own people?



The day of Harris’ nomination a friend of mine, a Black man, admitted that he was more critical of Harris’ past policies than he would be of other politicians. His reason being, “If a politician came from humble beginnings, I expect them to be more critical of capitalism than others. If a politician is a POC (person of color), I expect them to be more aware and focused on racial inequality.”

Looking around, there are individuals on the national stage and right here in Spokane, representing both sides of the aisle, who have been labeled Black Beards. The implication is that they do not have the best interests of the Black community at heart. But how do we determine whether or not a Black person truly fits that role, or if we are simply using a different metric for criticism? It’s an important question worth asking, but with an answer, I believe, that won’t come easy.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg Defended Important Social Justice Gains, Including Health Care

By **Ben Jealous**



(TriceEdney-Wire.com) - The late Ruth Bader Ginsburg was an intellectual giant with a righteous spirit. She used her brilliant

mind and steely determination to protect the gains of the civil rights movement and advance the values of freedom, equality, justice, and opportunity. She inspired generations of activists with the example of her persistence. We who learned from and looked up to Justice Ginsburg now must fight for her legacy.

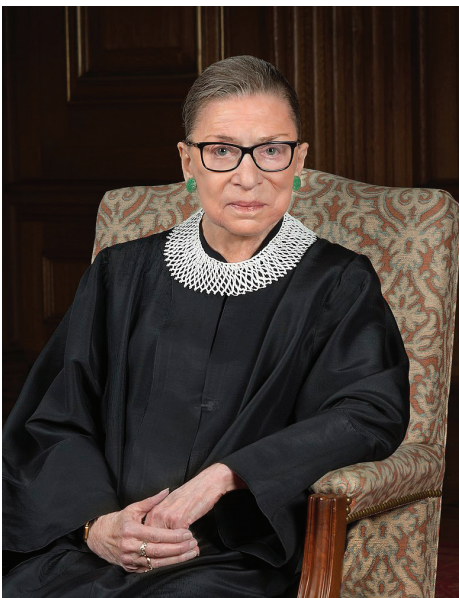
Ginsburg may be most remembered for her lifelong struggle to overcome and eliminate obstacles to equality and opportunity for women, including the right of women to make the most important decisions about their lives, their bodies, and their families. The truth is that she was just as steady in her defense of the gains made by other great social justice movements of our time, including the fight to expand access to health care.

In the face of intense Republican efforts to destroy the Affordable Care Act—known as Obamacare—Ginsburg defended the

ACA and the constitutional powers of the federal government to protect people’s wellbeing. The ACA has been hugely important to Black Americans, whose health outcomes and mortality rates are significantly worse than white Americans. The ACA produced real progress in narrowing health disparities, but President Donald Trump and the right-wing judges he has been putting on the courts—and would like to fill Ginsburg’s seat with—would do away with Obamacare and its expansion of Medicaid. If they kill the ACA, 23 million people will lose health coverage.

Ginsburg served on the Supreme Court at a time when the well-funded right-wing push for ideological domination of the federal courts began to take hold. She often played the role of the Great Dissenter. She denounced right-wing justices’ indifference to the impact of their decisions on working people. She exposed the conservative majority’s bogus justifications for unjust decisions.

Lilly Ledbetter went to court when she discovered the company she worked for had been unfairly paying her less than men for years. She was denied justice when the Supreme Court’s conservatives twisted the federal law that was supposed to protect employees from discrimination on the job. Wage discrimination harms Black women, who are typically paid just 62 percent of what white non-Hispanic men are paid. It



takes a typical Black woman 19 months to make what a white man earns in 12 months. Ginsburg’s dissent showed Congress the path to put protections back in place.

And I will never forget Ginsburg’s blazing dissent from the right-wing justices’ 2013 vote to rip the heart out of the Voting Rights Act—gutting one of the greatest accomplishments of the civil rights movement. She documented the ever-changing tactics of voter suppression and intimidation targeting Black voters. And she called out the majority for failing to recognize the “transformative effect” that the Fifteenth Amendment, enacted after the Civil War, aimed to achieve.

She was proved correct when state after state, mostly old Confederate states, imposed new restrictions on voting that fell most heavily on Black citizens, whose disenfranchisement the Voting Rights Act was designed to prevent.

Ginsburg told a reporter that she would like to be remembered as “Someone who used whatever talent she had to do her work to the very best of her ability. And to help repair tears in her society, to make things a little better through the use of whatever ability she has.”

We will remember her as that, and as much more. We will remember her as a true patriot, committed to the American ideal of equality under law, a principle for which she fought literally until her dying breath.

With her writing and the example of her life, Justice Ginsburg bent the moral arc of the universe in the direction of justice. And when injustice advanced, she planted seeds of democratic renewal that we must now nourish with our own lives and activism.

Ben Jealous serves as president of People For the American Way and People For the American Way Foundation. Jealous has decades of experience as a leader, coalition builder, campaigner for social justice and seasoned nonprofit executive. In 2008, he was chosen as the youngest-ever president and CEO of the NAACP. He is a graduate of Columbia University and Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar, and he has taught at Princeton and the University of Pennsylvania.

OUR VOICES

Winter in America

By Jamala Rogers

(blackcommentator.com) Winter in America. It's the title song from the album of the same name written and performed by urban poet Gil Scott-Heron. Released in 1974, Scott-Heron's music projected the conditions of African Americans during that period and which still ring true today. The imagery of winter - bleak, harsh, unforgiving - is not lost on the lyrics. The prophetic voice of Scott-Heron has been my personal soundtrack during the Black Lives Matter protests and I have concluded: it's winter in America all the time for Black folks.

Black people have done much of what America has demanded of us to show that we are worthy of being part of the democratic experiment. We have fought and died heroically in all wars since the American Revolution when Crispus Attucks was the first to take a bullet for this country. We memorized state constitutions in order to vote and yet the Black vote remains provisional. We educated ourselves, even when it was illegal, as proof that we were not intellectually inferior. Black folks entertained generations with our song, music and dance, and with our athletic talents. Our inventions to make life easier, safer, and more productive have been gifts to the world.

Black people get killed by police and their proxies in the most ordinary of circumstances. Driving, shopping, walking, jogging, praying, shopping, playing, traveling, working, chillin' and the other ways dramatized in #23Ways by Black

celebrities such as Chris Rock and Beyoncé. The tears of Black mothers flow like an endless river going nowhere. Anti-blackness is everywhere.

Our forced free labor for nearly 250 years of working from sunup to sundown laid the foundation for this country to become the great economic superpower it is today. Add to that another 100 years in what Douglas Blackmon calls "slavery by another name," when chattel slavery was supposed to have ended with emancipation but was replaced by forms of forced labor, such as convict leasing and sharecropping. The Black Codes legitimized the exploitation of men and women in a system where death would come long before a debt was paid off.

This form of neo-slavery went well into the 20th century followed by the depressed wages of Black workers right up to the present. At any given period, African Americans have been the most unemployed, the most poorly paid, the last hired and the first fired. It is our ugly reality that working hard will never get us ahead permanently. Any meaningful progress is temporary at best.

When African Americans were told to get their own, we built the Black Wall Streets in communities across the country. Those hard-earned successes were never celebrated by white America, instead they became the target of racist massacres fueled by hate and envy.

Black people must resign ourselves to the historical truth that we may never be accepted into the American family. De-

spite our persistent efforts to contribute to U.S. society and fit in as full-fledged, respected citizens, Black people are continuously met with contempt and cruelty. That we'll never be considered equals is a hard pill to swallow given all the hoops and hurdles that we've gone through. The rules keep changing and the goal posts keep moving, guaranteeing we will never cross the proverbial finish line to full humanity. Black bodies continue to be monetized or weaponized, rarely humanized.

White people must own up to their ugly history, and that they are down with some or all parts of racism. Racism remains intact because it has served to protect white interests and preserve white supremacy. With few exceptions, white people have been actively or passively complicit in the dehumanization of Black folks by supporting laws - written and unwritten - that keep us out of their neighborhoods, schools, workplaces and government. White folks have sat on juries, committees, councils and boards of this and that to ensure that our history, culture, homesteads, jobs and schools would be controlled or destroyed. Whites have borne witness or actively participated in the control of Black movement - geographically, economically, socially and politically - for the past 400 years.

Black folks and white folks have to confront the inescapable truths staring at us today as we contemplate the path forward. For Blacks, is it time to draw the collective conclusion that we will never be accepted in this society and plan ac-



cordingly? For whites, can they completely sever their historical and psychological ties to white supremacy that deny the humanity of all non-whites?

I believe this is where we are in the current and uncomfortable discussion of structural racism and racial hatred. This moment of racial upheaval should move this discussion in radical ways and remove any pretense that we are all striving for the lofty principles of a democracy.

Gil Scott-Heron's refrain in Winter in America laments that we aren't fighting the real fight because we don't know "what to save." If those of us living in America don't figure out soon what's at stake, there are a lot more winters ahead for all of us.

Jamala Rogers is a BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member and Columnist. She is founder and Chair Emeritus of the Organization for Black Struggle in St. Louis, as well as an organizer, trainer and speaker. She is the author of The Best of the Way I See It - A Chronicle of Struggle. Other writings by Ms. Rogers can be found on her blog jamalarogers.com.

Black Lives Matter T-Shirts and Masks - Who Profits?

By Julianne Malveaux



(TriceEdney-Wire.com) - I always smile when I see Black Lives Matter T-Shirts until I saw one gracing the grubby back of a white man who had on both a

BLM T-Shirt and a MAGA (Make America Great Again) hat. I started to either take a photo or start a conversation because I knew somebody would accuse me of making the combination up. Instead, I wondered where the man got the shirt/hat combo. Was he homeless and got the combo at a shelter? Was he visually impaired and didn't understand the contradiction? Without starting a conversation, I was left to my imagination. It had me thinking about the production and distribution of BLM wearables and the profit stream they may be creating.

You can find custom-designed screened T-shirts online for as little as \$5 apiece, and anybody can make T-shirts and a profit. If

Black lives, Black dollars, and Black profits matter, it makes sense to look behind the t-shirt to consider the sellers and their motives. You might be funding your oppression by purchasing the right message from the wrong seller.

I think the best place to buy BLM clothing and accessories (I've seen hats, bags, signs, and more) is from the BLM website, www.blacklivesmatter.org.

Things will cost more the re than they might cost from a street vendor or another source, but the BLM site profits will fund the movement. From the BLM site, you can also sign up to get email updates. The second best source is a BLACK street vendor, who will at least be able to pocket the difference between what she purchased the shirts for and what she sold them for.

Increasingly, COVID-imposed economic hardship has motivated people to take their entrepreneurial ability to the streets. The next best source might be BLM-friendly activist organizations that are selling BLM stuff. It doesn't hurt them, though, to ask where they got the shirts and where the profits go.

The worst place to get BLM material is from a capitalist retail establishment like Walmart, which sells the shirts and (until June) All Lives Matter shirts, Irish Lives

Matter shirts, and Homeless Lives Matter shirt. While taking nothing from the homeless or the Irish, in some ways, these shirts attempt to undermine and minimize the purpose and focus of the Black Lives Matter movement. We say Black Lives Matter emphatically because our lives didn't matter when our country was founded. They didn't matter when we were lynched, and no one was ever prosecuted. Our lives have little value when we are treated inhumanely, with our little girls being dragged by their braids by rabid police officers, shot in the back, subjected to chokeholds to the point where we can't breathe, endured a knee to the neck to the point of death and more. Taking the Black Lives Matter slogan and spoofing it (Drunk Wives Matter) attempts to minimize the racism that riddles our country.

Walmart stopped selling the All Lives Matter shirts after getting criticism from the BLM movement, but it still sells Blue Lives Matter shirts and paraphernalia. It sells shirts that say Bartender Lives Matter and Cat Lives Matter shirts as well. While no one has a trademark on the term "Lives Matter," satirizing Black Lives Matter is, at the very least, disrespectful. It is anti-black hostility.

In June, Walmart said it would spend \$100 million over five years creating a "center

for racial equity." Though its CEO, Doug McMillon, explicitly said "Black Lives Matter" at a June virtual company-wide meeting, the commitment was vague. Walmart, one of the largest employers of African Americans, put their money where their rhetoric is and pay people fairly, provide good benefits (including health care and paid sick leave), and establish a center for racial equity. With 2019 profits exceeding \$123 billion in profit, they can certainly afford to spend a fraction of one percent of those profits on racial equity.

There are online T-shirt companies that sell Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter T-shirts, missing BLM's whole point. They include Wild Bobby and Old Glory Merchandise, neither of which is Black-owned. They are just capitalists hedging their bets, just like the white-owned stores that offer discriminatory service but put BLM signs in their window. Instead, why not look for a Black-owned t-shirt company. All you have to do is google "Black-owned T-shirt company," and dozens pop up.

Don't let the BLM movement be a profit center for predatory capitalists. Ask questions before you buy. Buy Black.

For more information please visit www.julianne-malveaux.com or email booking@julianne-malveaux.com

IT'S UP TO US!

Business is always tough, but being a small, local business recently got a lot harder. Live Local is stepping in to keep consumers connected to the businesses in their communities. **Join us.**

Pictured: Fresh Soul on East 5th Ave



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Launching soon — a directory of Inland Northwest businesses and their offerings. Stay tuned for updates, and make sure your business gets listed.

BUSINESS CONSULTING

Our team of consultants are providing free advice to help small businesses thrive in this season and beyond. Register now for upcoming virtual events.



REGISTER YOUR BUSINESS OR LEARN MORE AT [LIVELOCALINW.COM](https://live.localinw.com)



OCTOBER EVENTS

OCTOBER 1

TRANSITIONS' PEOPLE WHO CARE VIRTUAL EVENT

Respecting the Human Dignity of Those Experiencing Homelessness

People Who Care will take its guests on a journey to inspire the belief that we all deserve to be treated with dignity no matter the circumstances we find ourselves in. The event will be just 45 minutes long. Registration is free, and all registrants will receive a digital coupon to Transitions' New Leaf Café for a 16oz beverage and baked good or snack pack.

12:00pm-12:45pm

Virtual Fundraiser

For more information about the People Who Care event, call (509) 328-6702, email pwc@help4women.org or visit www.pwc2020.com.

OCTOBER 1- 11

THE 9TH ANNUAL SOCIAL JUSTICE FILM FESTIVAL (Virtual Event)

Transform: Another World is Possible



The Social Justice Film Festival & Institute will host the 2020 Social Justice Film Festival, Transform: Another World is Possible, which will take place online from October 1-11. Film topics range from civil rights abuses and systemic racism to health, immigration, and environmental preservation. More than 60 films and four live panel discussions. All events will be free to the public and streamed live from the Social Justice Film Festival's Facebook account.

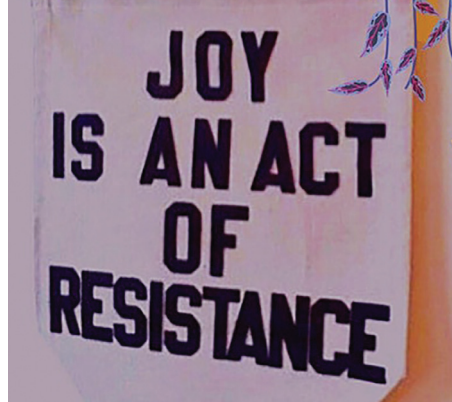
Each film block is priced on a sliding scale of \$5-\$25. Pay what you can! Festival passes are available on a sliding scale of \$75, \$100, and \$125. Live panel discussions are free to all.

Tickets are available at <https://socialjustice-filmfest.eventive.org>

OCTOBER 8

SPOKANE PEOPLE OF COLOR AFFINITY SPACE

A Virtual People of Color-Specific Space for the BIPOC Spokane Community to Gather, Breathe and Heal.



A virtual People of Color specific space for the BIPOC Spokane community to gather, breathe and heal. During times like these we need access to each other, to center our humanity, our needs, our voices. We hope this space can be a place to breathe deeply and know that you matter and are loved!

5:30pm-7:30pm

Online Event

To learn more about how you can get involved, email michaelab@unitedwayspokane.org or lesleye@unitedwayspokane.org

OCTOBER 14

FUSE DIVERSITY BOOK CLUB

Trace: Memory, History, Race and American Landscapes by Lauret Savoy

Winner of the ASLE Creative Writing Award and the American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation; Finalist for the PEN American Open Book Award and the Phillis Wheatley Book Award. In this provocative and powerful mosaic of personal journeys and historical inquiry across a continent and time, Savoy explores how the country's still unfolding history, and ideas of "race," have marked her and the land.

6:30pm-8pm

Virtual Discussion

Visit the Fuse Book Club Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/fusediversity>

VIRTUAL GROUP

A Cup of Culture

Saturdays at 12:30pm



I invite you to join me for a cup of culture where I will be sharing facts, tips, insights and strategies about diversity.

If you aren't a part of my private Facebook group, Transforming Hearts and Minds for Racial Reconciliation, then it is time for you to join.

To join the Facebook Group: facebook.com/groups/racial-reconciliationwithdrwilburn

OCTOBER 19

NAACP GENERAL MEETING

Join the NAACP for our monthly general membership meeting. Meetings are currently online. For more information please check social media or contact the NAACP at 509-209-2425 or visit: naacpspokane.org.

Spokane Coalition Of Color

Virtual Candidate Forum - Oct 7

The Spokane Coalition of Color (SCOC), which is comprised of the Spokane Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Hispanic Business/Professional Association (HBPA), the Spokane Chapter of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Coalition (APIC), and Muslims for Community Action and Support (MCAS), in partnership with The Black Lens, will be holding a series of Candidate Forums.

October 7, 6:00-7:30pm

State Legislative Districts 4 and 6

To register visit www.eventbrite.com/e/spokane-candidate-forums-tickets-118579932771

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11AM - 3PM

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LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

CARLE WAXER CENTER

Compassionate Addiction Treatment

Community Center

Smithsonian Affiliates Virtual Scholar Lecture
Legacy of The Green Book
October 15, 2020, 7 pm
Free Admission
Register Online at northwestmuseum.org

The Smithsonian's Marquette Folley interviews Candacy Taylor, leading scholar and award-winning author, photographer, and documentarian on the legacy of the Green Book, in this free webinar.

First published in 1936 by Harlem postman Victor Hugo Green, *The Negro Motorist-Green Book* (the Green Book) provided black travelers with information on hotels, restaurants and service stations where they would be welcomed.

Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture
northwestmuseum.org

Send information about upcoming community events to sandy@blacklensnews.com or call 509-795-1964 with information.



Community Essentials

WE'RE DOING OUR PART

At Spokane Transit, our essential employees are dedicated to maintaining public transit in our community.

Read our stories at SpokaneTransit.com/CommunityEssentials