

THE BLACK LENSTM

NEWS FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Teen Who Wrote Essay About Gun Violence Killed By Stray Bullet

By Sandra Williams

In 2016, **Sandra Parks**, a Milwaukee, Wisconsin sixth-grade student, wrote an essay titled "Our Truth". The essay was about gun violence and earned her third place in Milwaukee Public School's city-wide Martin Luther King Jr. essay contest, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported.

"In the city in which I live, I hear and see examples of chaos almost everyday. Little children are victims of senseless gun violence. There is too much Black on Black crime. As an African-American, that makes me feel depressed. Many people have lost faith in America and its ability to be a living example of Dr. King's dream!" Sandra wrote.

In January 2017, according to NPR.org, when interviewed about her essay, Sandra told Wisconsin Public Radio, "All you hear about is somebody dying and somebody getting shot. People do not think about whose father or son or granddaughter or grandson was just killed."

In 2018, on November 19, the eighth-grader at Keefe Avenue School, who had spoken so eloquently about the senselessness of gun violence was shot and killed when a stray bullet struck her through her bedroom window while she was watching television.

According to police reports, two Black men, Isaac Barnes, 26 and Untrell Oden, 27, were in the neighborhood



walking from a store when Barnes shot at an "unknown target" striking Sandra Parks in the chest. Both men have been arrested.

Fox news reported that six spent casings were recovered from the roadway in front of the home, and there were four bullet strikes to Sandra Park's window.

Bernice Parks, Sandra's mother, said she awoke to the

sound of gunshots and her daughter calling, "Momma I'm shot."

Sandra was "everything this world is not," her mother told WISN-TV. "My baby was not violent. My baby did not like violence. She didn't deserve to leave the world like that."

Speaking to reporters, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett

expressed his frustration, "Sandra Parks, a 13-year-old, went into her bedroom. She never came out alive. Tragically, her death was caused by someone who just decided they were going to shoot bullets into her house -- and she's dead. She died because somebody obviously decided that they were going to settle a score, express anger, try to scare someone -- I don't know what they were doing. I don't know that the police know what they were doing. All we know is that a 13-year-old died last night in her bedroom."

According to her mother, Sandra wanted to go to college and become a writer. In her 2017 NPR interview, Sandra talked about her lofty goals for the future. "I would like to stop all the violence and negativity that's going on in the world," she said.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that Sandra's shooting is the city's 91st homicide this year. Twelve children from Milwaukee public schools have been homicide victims since 2016, a school district spokesperson is quoted as saying in Newsweek and Sandra was the seventh homicide since January, the New York Times reported.

A vigil held outside Parks' home drew dozens of people to honor the teen and a GoFund me campaign has been set up by the family to cover the cost of Sandra's memorial service: <https://www.gofundme.com/helpsandrainthetoeven>

Our Truth

By Sandra Parks

Sometimes, I sit back and I have to escape from what I see and hear every day. I put my headphones on and let the music take me away. I move to the beat and try to think about life and what everything means. When I do, I come to the same conclusion ... we are in a state of chaos.

In the city in which I live, I hear and see examples of chaos almost everyday. Little children are victims of senseless gun violence. There is too much Black on Black crime. As an African-American, that makes me feel depressed. Many people have lost faith in America and its ability to be a living example of Dr. King's dream!

The truth is, faith and hope in what people can do has been lost in the poor choices we make. We shall overcome has been lost in the lie of who we have become! So now, the real truth is, we need to rewrite our story so that faith and hope for a better tomorrow is not only within us, but we believe it and we put it into actions.

Our first truth is that we must start caring about each other. We need to be empathetic and try to walk in each other's shoes. We shall overcome when we eliminate the negative and nasty comments people make about each other. We shall overcome, when we love ourselves and the people around us. Then, we become our brothers keeper.

Our second truth is that we need to have purpose. We are the future generation, therefore we must have an education to make a positive difference in the world. We are the future leaders, but if we don't have an education, we will accomplish nothing. We will overcome, when we use our education to make the world a better place. We will become the next President, law enforcement officers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and lawmakers. We cannot continue to put the responsibility on other people. It is our responsibility as future leaders!

We must not allow the lies of violence, racism, and prejudice to be our truth. The truth begins with us. Instead of passing each other like ships in the night, we must fight until our truths stretch to the ends of the world.

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ON MY MIND

THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

By Sandra Williams

Fertile Ground

When I was in my twenties, I was recruited to be a tester to check for housing discrimination here in Spokane. Our local fair housing agency had received complaints about racial discrimination against the manager of an apartment complex located in the Spokane Valley. The complainants said that the manager had vacant apartments but would not rent one to a Black person. The agency had decided to do a formal investigation.

My job as a tester was to be one of two people who would go and try to fill out an application for an apartment at the complex. One tester was Black (me) and the other was white. I don't know who that person was. I was given a fake background that I had to remember, with an employment history, family make-up and income level, that as it turns out was nearly identical to the fake background that was given to the white tester. On paper, at least, there wasn't much difference between the two of us, which was the point.

As I was growing up, the images of what racism looked like had been etched into my consciousness. Snarling dogs and water hoses turned on defenseless Black people. Angry, hate-filled, raging white southerners blocking the doorway of a white elementary school so that a terrified tiny little Black girl couldn't get inside. Torches. Nooses. Burning crosses. The KKK. Martin Luther King Jr. getting gunned down in broad daylight.

Those were the images of racism in my head. Those were the things that racist people did. So, to be honest, I was worried about the person that I would encounter when I did the test. If the manager was in fact a racist person, actively discriminating against people because of their race, as had been the accusations, then they must be an awful, scary, hateful person. Right?

But when I knocked on the apartment manager's door, ready to run away if I needed to, instead of the confederate flag waving, neo-nazi that I was expecting, I was greeted warmly by a smiling thirty-ish mother, who looked more like a school teacher or a bank teller or a church lady, who was friendly and disarming, and who chatted me up for what seemed like a pretty long time before telling me how sorry she was that she didn't have any vacancies at the moment.

I believed her. Bought it hook, line and sinker, as the old saying goes. And I told the agency as much when I turned in my report. Somebody must have gotten things wrong, I told them, maybe misunderstood.



Misjudged. She seemed like such a nice person. I was informed by them, however, that the manager had offered to rent an apartment to the white tester that had visited her right after me. I've never forgotten what it felt like when I heard those words.

Not too long ago Westboro Baptist Church made one of their now-familiar swings through Spokane to protest one thing or another. For those not familiar with Westboro, they are a dwindling group of mostly related family members who belong to a "christian" church based in Topeka Kansas. They have gained an international reputation for their vile and intentionally inflammatory hate speech directed at just about everybody that isn't them.

Westboro Baptist church, like the various neo-nazi, and nazi look-a-like groups that seem to have been springing up lately, are unilaterally vilified by just about everybody, at least publicly so. There is pretty much bi-partisan condemnation directed at them, which is as it should be. But I argue that people like them are not the real problem. They are out in the open. Easy to spot, wearing their hatred and racism on their collective sleeves, which in a weird kind of way, I have some respect for. At least they are honest.

The bigger problem, I believe, is the people like that apartment manager. Smiling, friendly, likable. The school crossing guards, construction workers, corporate executives, union members, attorneys, doctors and politicians, etc who make up the very foundation of this country. Woven and embedded into its fabric. Who, would never, ever, do anything overtly vile or hostile towards a person of color, but who through their actions, or inaction, are perpetuating and benefiting from a racist system, and thus are complicit in it.

You can blame Donald Trump, as some do daily, for spending the past several years sowing seeds of hatred, fear and division in this country, and certainly those actions are worthy of blame, but a seed that lands on barren soil will not take root. You can not blame Donald Trump for the fertile ground that his seeds landed on. That fertile ground was already here.

Perhaps in the coming year, we can spend more time figuring out what to do about that. Just a little 2019 food for thought.

THE BLACK LENS NEWS

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

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From the Black Lens



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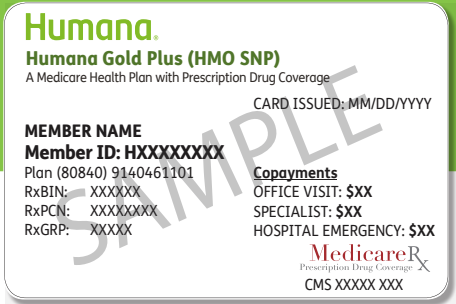
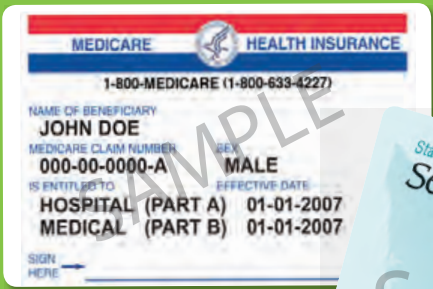
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BLACK NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Local, State, National and Around the World

Two Black Men 'Mistakenly' Shot and Killed by Police

Jemel Roberson



(Source: Natalie Degraffinried, theroot.com)

Twenty-six year old Jemel Roberson was a security guard at Manny’s Blue Room Bar in Robbins, Illinois. According to The Root, on Nov. 11 witnesses said that security told a group of intoxicated men they had to leave the bar. One of the men returned armed. Shots were exchanged between the man and armed security guards. Roberson did what he had been trained to do, he subdued the shooter. Witness, Adam Harris told WGN9 TV, “He had somebody on the ground with his knee in his back, with his gun in his back,



like ‘don’t move.’ According to witnesses, two police officers arrived on the scene while Roberson was holding the man down and one of them shot Roberson. “Everybody was screaming out, ‘he was a security guard,’ and they basically saw a Black man with a gun and killed him,” Harris told WGN TV. Roberson’s family attorney, Lee Merritt, said Jemel, who had a 9-month-old son and another child on the way, was picking up extra shifts ahead of the holidays. “He was concerned about making his family’s first Christmas special,” Merritt said.

Emantic Fitzgerald Bradford Jr



Source: Miranda Fulmore, National Public Radio npr.org)

Emantic “EJ” Bradford Jr. died on November 22, Thanksgiving night, after being shot by a police officer working security at the Riverchase Galleria Mall in Hoover, Alabama. Initially, police reports said that Bradford was killed after fighting with a teenager, who he shot, also wounding a 12-year-old bystander. That version of the incident was widely circulated to the media. Officials recanted that version of the story the next day, saying that Bradford was “most likely” not the shooter, but that he had been “brandishing a gun”



during the moments following the shooting. NPR reports that on November 25, Bradford’s family spoke at a news conference accompanied by their attorney, Ben Crump. According to Crump, witnesses have come forward since the shooting saying the police officer who killed Bradford “did not give any verbal commands to Bradford before shooting him in the face” and “police offered Bradford no medical assistance after the shooting.” Bradford’s family is calling on the Hoover Police Department to release the mall video, witness videos and body camera footage of Bradford’s death.

Son of Ferguson Activist Found Hanged



(Sources: Tanasia Kenney, atlantablackstar.com; Anne Branigin, theroot.com)

Danye Jones, (age 24) was found dead in October, hanging from a tree on his family’s property. Jones is the son of Melissa McKinnies, a prominent protester who helped organize demonstrations during the Ferguson, Missouri Uprising that followed the shooting

death of Michael Brown, a Black teenager who was killed by a white police officer in 2014.. McKinnies says her son was lynched in retaliation for her activist work. Authorities have ruled the death a suicide. A St. Louis County Police spokesman told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that “There were no signs of struggle or trauma to the body, and the family reported a suicide when they called 911.” Sgt. Shawn McGuire of the St. Louis PD said, “Our crimes against persons detectives investigated the incident and as of right now, based on the evidence and all the information we have, it appears to be a suicide.” However, McKinnies told the Post-Dispatch and KMOV-TV that she and her family have received death threats related to her organizing work organizing and that threats, delivered through social media, appeared to have escalated in the last two months. Three other prominent activists in Ferguson have also been found dead, the Atlanta Black Star reports, Darren Seals, DeAndre Joshua, and 23-year-old Shawn Gray, who was rumored to have been a witness to the grand jury in the Michael Brown case.

Former WSU Football Player Sues Pullman Police for Excessive Force

(Sources: Blue Telusma, thegrio.com; Chad Sokol, spokesman.com)

Former WSU football player Treshon Broughton filed a federal complaint in October against the Pullman (Washington) Police Department alleging that two of its officers used excessive force, violated his due process rights and “intentionally misrepresented events” to arrest him without cause. According to KXLY News in Spokane, Broughton was making a purchase at Bob’s Corner Market in the fall of 2017 when he was accused by a store employee of using a counterfeit \$20 bill.

A police report obtained by the Spokesman-Review confirmed the store employee called 911 just before 2 a.m. after Broughton got into a brief verbal altercation with a woman and her boyfriend as he left the store. Witnesses reported Broughton was drunk at the time. Things quickly calmed down and the employee told the dispatcher that “everything was good,” and that police weren’t needed on the scene after all. In surveillance video released by the police department, Broughton is seen re-entering the store minutes after leaving, walking behind one of the officers named in the suit, Shane Emerson.

Emerson’s body camera captures the interaction as the store employee tells the officer that Broughton tried using a fake \$20 bill earlier that evening. “You got ID with you, partner?” Emerson asks Broughton,



ton, placing his hand on Broughton’s arm. “Yeah, I got ID, I’ll take it out,” Broughton replies, rummaging through his pockets. “It’s probably around here somewhere. You can see whatever.” Emerson responds, “K, I need to see it.”

As Broughton places the contents from his pockets onto the counter, Emerson grabs for his arm again, prompting Broughton to pull away. In response, the officer calls for backup and instructs Broughton to place his hands behind his back. “I don’t want to get arrest-

ed,” Broughton reacts. “I’m showing you my ID!” But Emerson responds, “I don’t care about your ID right now.” At that point Officer Alex Gordon enters the store and helps Emerson tackle Broughton to the ground. Emerson is then seen repeatedly punching the side of Broughton’s head. As they struggle to restrain Broughton, Gordon tases Broughton in the back before they place him in handcuffs.

According to the Spokesman Review, the body cam video also shows Emerson communicating details of the incident to those present in the crowded store. Emerson’s version of the incident, however, contradicts what was captured in the video. “So, they told me he tried to use a \$20, a fake \$20 in there, all right,” Emerson is reported as saying, “So I needed to detain him. I said, ‘I need to see your ID.’ He said, ‘I’m not giving you shit. I’m not working with you.’ “Then he starts pulling away and trying to run, so we’re trying to get him on the ground, and he was fighting,” Emerson continues. “I had enough reason to detain him and he was completely fighting.”

Broughton was later cleared of charges and no counterfeit \$20 bill was ever found. In his suit, Broughton argues that the officers arrested him without probable cause and then prepared police reports that “intentionally misrepresented events” to support false charges of obstructing law enforcement and resisting arrest.

BLACK NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Local, State, National and Around the World

Comcast to Launch Cable Networks Dedicated to Black Consumers



By Defender News Service
(www.blackpressusa.com) Nearly two years after Comcast announced it would be launching a competition to create two new independently Black-owned cable channels to include in its line up, the telecommunications company has announced the winners.

In a press release issued Thursday, Nov. 15, Comcast declared Afro and Cleo TV will be launching on its Xfinity TV platform in January 2019.

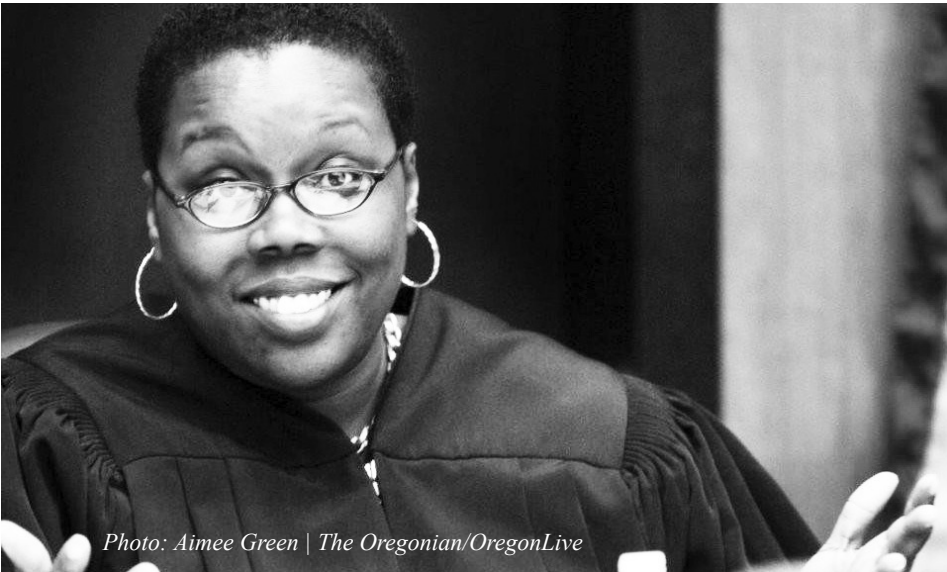
Afro is a network coming from Afrotainment. It is a 24-hour poly-cultural Black channel that focuses on airing top-rated Nollywood (Nigerian) and Black films, dramas, sitcoms, music, talk, and late-night comedy programs.

Cleo TV, which is owned by the largest Black-owned multimedia company, Urban One, Inc. (formerly Radio One, Inc.), is aimed at Millennial and Gen X Black women by providing lifestyle and entertainment programming. The network, which takes its name from the Egyptian ruler Cleopatra, will provide short-form and long-form content including travel, home design, cooking, talk shows, movies, docu-series, and sitcoms.

Afro and Cleo TV were selected out of dozens of submitted established networks.

Adrienne Nelson

First African American Appointed to Oregon Supreme Court



(Source: Aimee Green, oregonlive.com)

Oregon Governor Kate Brown appointed Adrienne Nelson to the State Supreme Court in January, making her the first African American to serve on the court in the state's 158-year history.

Prior to this appointment, Nelson was appointed to the Multnomah County Circuit court by then-governor Ted Kulongoski in 2006 where she served for nearly 12 years.

Nelson, who grew up in Arkansas, attended the University of Arkansas, followed by the University of Texas Law School. For three years she worked as a public defender at Multnomah Defenders Inc. and then at the Portland law firm of Bennett, Hartman, Morris and Kaplan from 1999 to 2004.

Nelson is also a past recipient of the Multnomah Bar Association's Award of Merit and the Oregon State Bar's Diversity and Inclusion Award.

Two Black Country Singers Holding Down Number One Spots On The Music Charts



(Source: Ricky Riley, <https://blavity.com>; Cillea Houghton & Sterling Whitaker, <http://tasteofcountry.com>)

Jimmie Allen and Kane Brown are two Black Nashville artists that are currently topping the music charts.

Jimmie Allen's hit single "Best Shot" recently debuted at No.1 on Billboard's Country Airplay chart. That #1 debut made Allen the first Black artist to launch a country music career with a number 1 song, and according to Taste of Country, Allen now joins fellow country singer Darius Rucker, the only other Black country artist to reach No. 1 with a debut single.

In a press statement, Allen, who was living in his car for several months, is quoted as saying, "If someone asked me two years ago if I thought that this would be my life today—that I'd be on the red carpet at the CMAs or my song would be the No. 1 song on country radio, I would have honestly said no."

"Experiment", the second album for Kane Brown, a Georgia native, debuted at the top spot on the Billboard 200 chart. Brown joins artists Carrie Underwood and Jason Aldean as the only country artists to debut at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 in 2018 and is also the first male country artist to debut at the top of the Billboard 200 with a sophomore release in 24 years. Released on Nov. 9, Experiment set a new Apple Music record for the largest debut of a country album in the first 24 hours of release, racking up 2.5 million streams in one day.

A controversial track on Brown's new album, "American Bad Dream," addresses the issue of guns and policing. Brown, who said he has family members in law enforcement and in jail, admitted that he was nervous writing the song, but told Taste of Country, "after we finished the song, I felt that we wrote it well enough that you could see that I wasn't trying to say anything bad ... just cause awareness."

The two men will join forces in 2019 with Jimmie Allen opening for Kane Brown on the Kane Brown: Live Forever Tour that will kick off Jan. 10 and make stops in the states of Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Illinois, South Dakota, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Louisiana, Texas and more.

Marvin Gaye and Gregory Hines To Be Featured On 2019 Forever Stamps



(Source: NewsOne Staff, newsone.com)

To honor to the legacies of the late actor and dancer Gregory Hines and the legendary singer Marvin Gaye, the Philadelphia Tribune reported that the U.S. Postal Service announced that the two would be a part of it's 2019 Forever stamp collection.

Gaye's stamp will be a part of the Music Icon collection, the Tribune reported. The imagery for the stamp was created by artist Kadir Nelson, best known for creating album covers for Drake and Michael Jackson and cover art for several issues of The New Yorker. Five years ago Ron Brewington, an executive at the Motown Alumni Association, launched a campaign called "A Stamp for Marvin" and garnered the support of the Los Angeles City Council, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and several celebrities.

The stamp commemorating Gregory Hines, inspired by a 1988 photo of the actor, will be included in the Black Heritage collection.

Gregory Hines and Marvin Gaye follow educator and author Booker T. Washington who on April 7, 1940 became the first Black person featured on a U.S. postage stamp.

Simone Biles Becomes Most-decorated Female Gymnast in World Championships History



(Source: Emily Caron, Sports Illustrated, www.si.com, Photo Credit: Facebook)

In November, Four-time Olympic champion, Simone Biles, became the first American ever to win a medal in every event at the gymnastics world championships after winning four golds, a silver and a bronze medal, according to Sports Illustrated. The championships to place in State of Qatar.

Biles took a gold medal in the team competition, the all-around, floor exercises, and the vault; a silver medal on the uneven bars, and a bronze medal on the balance beam.

The six medals gave Biles 20 for her career, reported Sports Illustrated, putting Biles into a tie with Svetlana Khorkina for the career record for a female gymnast.

The last female gymnast to medal in every event was Daniela Silivas of Romania at the 1988 Olympics. However, Biles has the record for most overall world titles, with 14.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

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

Olivia Hooker: Survivor of Tulsa Race Riots Dies at Age 103

Reprinted from National Public Radio - Radio Diaries. Nellie Gilles, NPR.org . Heard on All Things Considered.

Olivia Hooker, born in Muskogee, Oklahoma, on February 12, 1915, passed away at her home in White Plains, New York on November 21, 2018 at the age of 103. She was the first Black woman in the United States Coast Guard and is believed to be one of the last surviving witnesses of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot.

On May 31, 1921, the day of the riot, Olivia Hooker was six-years-old. She recounted her experience for an NPR interview given for Radio Diaries as a part of a series titled "Last Witness."



Olivia Hooker (front) and Aileen Anita Cooks on the USS Neversail at Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn, 1944. Image Ownership: Public domain

Dick Rowland, a young Black man, had been accused by a young white woman of assaulting her in an elevator. He was arrested and word spread through the Black community that white mobs were headed to the courthouse to lynch him. Those mobs were met by a group of armed Black men, many of whom were World War I veterans.

A confrontation followed and shots were fired, culminating in a day-long assault on Greenwood, a suburb of Tulsa. In less than 24 hours, the mobs destroyed and looted more than 1,000 homes and businesses, burning to the ground a prosperous Black neighborhood that had been referred to as "Black Wall Street".

Olivia recounted in the interview that a group of white men came through her backyard carrying torches. Her mother hid Olivia and her siblings under the dining room table, covering them with a tablecloth, as the men came into the house and destroyed everything of value that they could find, including her father's record player, which they broke, and her sister's piano, which they took an ax to.

"Fires had been started by the white invaders soon after 1 o'clock and other fires were set from time to time. By 8 o'clock practically the entire thirty blocks of homes in the Negro quarters were in flames and few buildings escaped destruction. Negroes caught in their burning homes were in many instances shot down as they attempted to escape."
— The New York Times, June 2, 1921

"It was a horrifying thing for a little girl who's only six years old," Olivia told Radio Diaries, "trying to remember to keep quiet, so they wouldn't know we were there."

It is estimated that as many as 300 people were killed that day in what is considered one of the worst incidents of racial violence in American history.

Olivia's parents, Samuel D. and Anita J. Hooker, moved the family to Columbus, Ohio after her father's business was destroyed in the riot. She attended Ohio State University, where she received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education and Psychology in 1937. After graduating from Ohio State, she taught third grade for seven years in Columbus. In 1944, she enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard becoming a member of the Coast Guard Women's Reserve or SPAR (Semper Paratus: Always Ready). Hooker was one of only five in the program and the first African American woman on active duty in the Coast Guard.

After her discharge, Hooker attended the Teachers College Columbia University through the GI Bill. There she received a Master's degree in 1947. She then became one of two female African American students in the graduate program at the University of Rochester. In 1962, Hooker received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology.

In 1997, Hooker was one of 104 survivors of the Tulsa Race Riots who filed a class action lawsuit for redress but the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case. She then helped found the Tulsa Race Riot Commission to petition the U.S. Congress to hear the case and to pay reparations because of the riot.



To listen to Olivia Hooker's NPR interview visit: <http://www.radiodiaries.org/tulsa-race-riot>



Film to Portray New York Stock Exchange Trader Lauren Simmons



(Source: Adedamola Agboola, blackenterprise.com; Jenna Chambers, afrotech.com; Nicole Lyn Pesce, Marketwatch.com)

At age 24, Lauren Simmons is currently the only full-time female equity trader working on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), according to Marketwatch. She is also only the second African American woman on the trading floor in the 226 year history of the NYSE.

Simmons, who is a native of Georgia, graduated from Kennesaw State University in 2016 with a bachelor's degree in genetics. Her work history includes positions as a supervisor at Six Flags in Georgia and an intern at Nordstroms. She told Marketwatch that she intended to go to medical school, but realized that her heart wasn't in it, so she took her love of numbers to Wall Street.

Simmons applied for a job opening that was posted on LinkedIn for a position at Rosenblatt Securities. Her employment was dependent on passing the difficult Series 19 exam, which she said only two out of ten people pass. Sim-

mons passed the test with no training or background in the financial industry and only one month to prepare. "I have zero family in finance, so I reached out on LinkedIn." Simmons told Marketwatch. "I emailed people. I cold-called people. I got told 'yeah,' 'maybe,' 'kind of,' 'no,'" she said. "But I'm a believer in you don't need 20 yeses, you just need one."

Variety reports that a film is in the works to chronicle the life of Lauren Simmons. Actress Kiersey Clemons is set to star in the independent film that will be made by AGC Studios, an independent movie studio that launched last year and acquired the rights to Simmons' life story.

Clemons, who recently appeared in "Hearts Beat Loud," an indie drama, and will next be seen in Disney's CGI and live action remake of "Lady and the Tramp," as well as Fox's live broadcast of "Rent," will also assist in producing the film alongside Eddie Galan and Starr Andreeff. Greg Shapiro, Stuart Ford and Glendon Palmer will act as Executive Producers.

NAACP UPDATE: SPOKANE



By Kurtis Robinson
NAACP #1137 President/ NAACP AOW-SAC Criminal Justice Chair

Greetings everyone,

I hope this holiday season finds you well. It's great to be back from fire season and I am honored to be serving another term as The Spokane NAACP Branch President.

As has been my speed (because, well it just seems to be) things have been moving very rapidly. I have gone from fires throughout the Northwest, to the birth of my son, to record Wildfire devastation in California, to a great Freedom Fund banquet, to our local

branch elections, and to visiting many of our local COC Churches.

We have some very powerful work to do and events to look forward to in 2019; such as the celebration of our 100-year Branch Anniversary, the state area Conference of the NAACP coming to Spokane, the Bail Project, MLK Jr. Day, The Women's March and many other very, very important, meaningful and intersectional engagements.

On Another note, here are the results from our November general meeting;

- Spokane NAACP Branch Officer elections:
- Members at Large: Tony Williams, Ike Okoli, Pinki Culbertson.
 - Secretary: Deborah Cano
 - Treasurer: Dorothy Webster
 - 3rd Vice President: Wesley Gardner
 - 2nd Vice President: Carmen Pacheco-Jones
 - 1st Vice President: Sharon Randle
 - Branch President: Kurtis Robinson

And of course we have many of our committee chairs still here and in operation. Your Spokane NAACP looks forward to continuing to press in and serve you.

In closing I leave you with an excerpt from the statements I have been making and will continue to make, in my visits our local COC churches:

Since I have come aboard in this capacity, I have striven to have a vision of Hope, Restoration, Transformation and Action in developing its place as a meaningful, intersectional, advocacy organization.

But we should not and need not ever do this alone ... it is my hope and it is my invite for those of you to who have not already partnered with us, to join in with us. Help us challenge the forces that are railed against us in the pursuit of the realization of the rights of every human being (let alone every American) to have authentic justice, true freedom, genuine prosperity, and the tools of strength and hope for generations to come, that will allow us to help move our communities of color and our American Nation forward beyond the best ideals of the founding fathers.

I also desire to speak to you the truth of the matter that (again) we cannot do this alone. That we must do this with each other, that the very fact that we are not allied at maximum capacity in relationship with

each other, is one of the very tools that the enemy of Light, Love, Liberty and Justice ..the enemy of our souls, within and without, uses against us.

This is not because it has advantage over us, especially those of the Faith in "Yeshua of Nazareth" (Jesus), but because we freely give it to him. "We must do our part". "We must strive to understand, be patient, forgiving and determined in our love for each other. Especially to those who have hurt or offended us (real or imagined). We must Love those who have oppressed us (and we know "that" is real).. we are to love each other and our enemies".

"I have heard it said: accountability without Love is finger-pointing & condemnation." I add that, "Love without restorative accountability is dysfunctional enablement." And as far as I can tell the Lord is about all of that kind of Love.

Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas!
Sincerely,
Kurtis Robinson

"We Can, We Will, We Must Move Forward, Together"

NAACP's Tiffany Dena Loftin Honored at Black Girls Vote Ball

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Correspondent (@StacyBrownMedia)

BALTIMORE, MD – National Director of the NAACP Youth and College Division, Tiffany Dena Loftin was awarded the Rising Star Award on Friday, November 16, 2018 at the 2nd Annual Black Girls Vote Ball.

The Black Girls Vote Ball celebrates the accomplishments of Black women in politics and activism who are making a difference not only in their community but around the world, according to a news release.

The Rising Star Award is bestowed upon a person for their clear demonstration and dedication to changing the world we live in for the better.

Black Girls Vote, Inc. was launched on what would have been Shirley Chisolm's 91st birthday, November 30, 2015 in Baltimore.

Through nontraditional engagement efforts that focus on meeting people where they are, Black Girls Vote has registered more than 16,000 voters.

Black Girls Vote (BGV) is also supporting the next generation of leaders and engaged voters through their High

School and Collegiate Ambassador Program where BGV Ambassadors activate their student body while bringing BGV's mission, vision and values on their campus, the organization said in the news release.

During this midterm election cycle, under the leadership of Loftin, the NAACP Youth and College Division completed a highly successful Vote 2018 campaign in just a few short weeks, Black Girls Vote officials said.

They were able to mobilize 5,800 students, recruit and maintain 2,607 new activists, host 232 "vote specific" events, organize at 174 schools across this nation and engage 33 of the 50 states, proving that young people are rising to the occasion and answering the call.

"I dedicate this award to everyone 35 and under who constantly prove this country wrong. I dedicate this award to those who can't vote. I dedicate this award to every Black woman who says I told you so," Loftin said as she accepted the award.

"Every year we have an opportunity to not only change government, to not only advance legislation, but to redefine democracy. I know we're winning because it's getting harder, but I am encouraged and inspired, and I'm committed to our communities," she said.



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2019 Mid-Term Elections

Democrats Take the House Win Sweeping Power in Congress

African Americans Will Assume Leadership Positions

By Frederick H. Lowe

Special to the Trice Edney News Wire from NorthStarNewsToday.com

(TriceEdneyWire.com)- Democrats took over the U.S. House of Representatives in the November midterm elections, which will boost the power and influence of representatives Maxine Waters, John Lewis, and Elijah Cummings.

Under the new order, Waters, a California Democrat, will become chair of the Financial Services Committee, and Elijah Cummings, a Maryland Democrat, is expected to become chair of the House Oversight Committee. This gives Democrats sweeping new powers, including the power to subpoena President Trump's tightly held income tax records if they so choose.

Congressman John Lewis, a Georgia Democrat, is a member of the Ways and Means Committee and he is the ranking House member on the Subcommittee on Oversight.

President Trump has spoken by phone to current House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, calling her to acknowledge the Democratic win.

Also, at least four African-Americans were elected to Congress for the first time. They include Colin Allred, who defeated an incumbent Republican in Texas's 32nd District in Dallas and Ayanna Pressley, the first Black woman elected to Congress from Massachusetts.

Pressley, a Chicago native, will represent Massachusetts' 7th Congressional District, which includes sections of Boston. She ran unopposed. All of the newly elected members of the House are Democrats.

The Democratic Party now controls 230 seats to the Republican Party's 205. A political party needs only 218 votes to control the House of Representatives. Republicans maintained control of the Senate, adding several seats.

Democrats winning the House smoothed over some big disappoints in state governor's races. Stacey Abrams in Georgia, Andrew Gillum in Florida, and former President/CEO of the NAACP, Ben Jealous, who was defeated by incumbent Republican Governor Larry Hogan.

The Trice Edney News Wire contributed to this story.

Meet the #Houston 19

19 Black Women Running for Judge in Texas Win Election



(Source: Hannah Smothers, Cosmopolitan.com/politics)

All 19 black women who ran for various judicial seats in Harris County (Houston, Texas) won their races in the November mid-term elections, marking the single biggest victory for Black women in the county's history.

Harris County, which encompasses most of Houston, is the third-largest county in the United States, and one of the most diverse.

"Never did I imagine that the day I decided to run to be judge, I'd become a part of a club of phenomenal Black women, sisters-

in-law, gifted, brilliant, strong – everything I hope to be!" LaShawn Williams, one of the women who won, posted to Facebook. "It is with great pride and excitement that I share this "Black Girl Magic" with you! Congratulations – you are truly black girl magic!" she continued.

In addition to Williams, other judicial winners included: Sandra Peake, Judge Ramona Franklin, Judge Maria Jackson, Germaine Tanner, Angela Graves-Harrington, Cassandra Holleman, Tonya Jones, Dedra Davis, Latosha Lewis Payne, Linda Dunson, Toria Finch, Erica Hughes, Lucia Bates, Ronnisha Bowman, Michelle Moore, Sharon Burney, Shannon Baldwin, and Lori Chambers Gray.

Mike Espy Loses Mississippi Senate Run-Off

By Nigel Roberts

Reprinted from Newsone.com

Democrat Mike Espy lost the Mississippi Senate runoff election to Cindy Hyde-Smith Tuesday night (November 27). But in reality, racism won as the state's citizens cast ballots for a woman who has made no secret of her affinity for white supremacy.

The election was a direct referendum on the president, whose multiple rallies for Hyde-Smith, who has been embroiled in a series of racist exposes, probably helped push the Republican over the finish line.

During his concession speech, Espy noted that what he had done was "still a historical achievement."

While early voting numbers were not immediately available, the NAACP pointed to "civic and democratic participation" in the election for why Espy may have fallen short.

"While we are hopeful that the Senator-elect will prove herself worthy of her new office, this election demonstrates the need to continue broadening the tent of



civic and democratic participation in our nation," the pioneering civil rights organization said in a brief statement. "We must continue to organize, empower Americans to make their voices heard, and use and harness this power to produce real change in Mississippi and nationwide."

Hyde-Smith and Espy were the top vote-getters among several candidates in a special election to replace retiring GOP Sen. Thad Cochran. A runoff was neces-



sary because none of the candidates won more than 50 percent of the votes on Election Day.

Espy was a clear underdog in the runoff election to unseat Hyde-Smith, who was appointed by the governor to complete Cochran's term. A recent survey showed that Hyde-Smith had a 10-point lead.

However, fearful Republicans scrambled on Monday to prevent Hyde-Smith from

losing the Senate seat, prompting President Donald Trump to hold rallies in the state for Hyde-Smith in the hope of turning out his base to vote for her.

The worry stemmed from an unguarded moment on her campaign trail when Hyde-Smith revealed her racist attitude toward African Americans. At a Nov. 2 campaign stop, she praised a longtime supporter. "If he invited me to a public hanging, I'd be on the front row," she was caught saying on a video posted to social media. In the following weeks, more revelations about her undying love for the Confederacy surfaced.

That created a possible opening for Espy. Black anger over Hyde-Smith's remarks was expected to drive African-Americans to the polls to cast their ballots for Espy, a former congressman who also served as agriculture secretary in the Clinton administration.

With Blacks comprising about 38 percent of Mississippi's population, some analysts believed Espy had a path to victory if Black voter turnout reached 40 percent of the electorate and white moderate Republicans flipped to his side.

Mia Love, the Only Black Republican Woman in Congress, Lost Re-election Bid



Special to the Trice Edney News Wire from NorthStarNewsToday.com

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - Ludmya "Mia" Love, the only Black Republican woman in Congress, won't be returning to Washington in January.

Love was defeated by her Democratic opponent in the November midterm elections to represent Utah's 4th Congressional district in suburban Salt Lake City.

Love, who was seeking a third term after first being elected in 2014, lost to Democrat Ben McAdams in a

close race, which wasn't decided until November 20, two weeks after the election.

McAdams, mayor of Salt Lake City, defeated Love by fewer than 700 votes, flipping a Republican-held seat in a deep red state.

Love was behind in the race from the beginning, but briefly took the lead in the contest before McAdams moved ahead.

Love's loss did not make President Trump sad. Right after the election,

he said, "Love gave me no love and she lost."

She refused to embrace him and his ideas, particularly blasting his immigration policies. Love is of Haitian descent, and Trump referred in the past to Haiti as a "shit hole country."

Love also faced federal scrutiny regarding her campaign fund-raising and had to repay the money.

In her concession speech, Love called on the GOP to pay more attention to minority voters or risk more defeats.

Both Abrams and Gillum Fall Just Short of Governors' Mansions

By Barrington M. Salmon

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - In the end, Stacey Abrams said voter suppression and systematic voter manipulation by former Secretary of State and Governor-Elect Brian Kemp tilted the Georgia governor's race in his favor.

After 10 days of legal, electoral and other maneuvering, Abrams bowed out of the race, ending a combative and bitter contest in her bid to become the first Black woman governor in the country.

An attorney, author and former minority leader in the Georgia House of Representatives, Abrams called Kemp "the architect of voter suppression" and accused him of purging voters rolls, delaying and denying new registrations and generally disenfranchising African-American and other non-white voters.

"I acknowledge that former Secretary of State Brian Kemp will be certified as the victor in the 2018 gubernatorial election," said Abrams at a Nov. 16 press conference. "But to watch an elected official who claims to represent the people in this state baldly pin his hopes for election on suppression of the people's democratic right to vote has been truly appalling."

Abrams castigated Kemp – who served since 2012 as secretary of state until he stepped down last week – making it clear that she refuses to act as if the election was normal, while pointing out that she wasn't making a concession speech.

She castigated Kemp for the "deliberate and intentional" voter suppression he employed and promised to continue to fight for fair and comprehensive elections.

"Pundits and hyper-partisans will hear my words as a rejection of the normal order. You see, I'm supposed to say nice things and accept my fate," she said. "They will complain that I should not use this moment to recap what was done wrong or to demand a remedy. You see, as a leader I should be stoic in my outrage and silent in my rebuke but stoicism is a luxury and silence is a weapon for those who would quiet the voices of the people. And I will not concede because the erosion of our democracy is not right."



Ayisha Porter-Rhanta, Journal-Constitution via Associated

Investigative Journalist Greg Palast filed an affidavit on November 15 in federal district court in Atlanta in support of the Common Cause Georgia's case filed against Kemp. Palast said on his website that an expert report from one of his consultants shows that 340,134 voters were wrongly purged from Georgia's voter rolls – without notice – by Kemp in 2016 and 2017 while Kemp was Secretary of State and preparing his run for Governor.

There are documented efforts of Kemp's machinations to suppress the vote in investigations by the Associated Press, Mother Jones and other news outlets. Kemp has removed significant swathes of African-Americans, Asians, and Latinos from voter rolls by purging more than 1.5 million voters – almost 11 percent of those registered – from the rolls between 2016 and 2018. He also closed 214 polling stations, the majority of them in poor and non-White neighborhoods.

And using a program called 'exact match,' he blocked almost 35,000 Georgia residents from registering from 2013 to 2016. Exact match only grants residents the right to vote if their registrations exactly match information found in state data bases. Registrations aren't accepted if there is a name difference, a misspelled word or an accent. Kemp's office also put more than 50,000 voter registrations on hold by using the unreliable "exact match" system. Fully 70 percent of those are Black.



Steve Cannon/Associated

Abrams' election run electrified African-Americans around the state. And the Black-woman-powered ground game brought Abrams to within two percentage points of beating Kemp.

"We've been working in Georgia all year," said Melanie Campbell, president/CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation. "Sisters laid the groundwork. We've been doing voter registration. While the focus has been on leaders, this was a coalition effort of women like Helen Butler of the Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda, who was all over the state. We were phone banking since the primaries calling Black women. People like Deborah Scott and Felicia Davis and groups like the Southern Black Women's Initiative and Shirley Sherrod were canvassing neighborhoods, developing voter profiles and putting women together."

Campbell said the emergence of Donald Trump, the rise in hate crimes and the ratcheting up of racism are of most concern to Black women. This has animated their resistance to Trump and the Republican agenda.

"The whole notion is that our lives are at stake. It's in our DNA," she said. "There is a drumbeat, a drumbeat knowing that this country is in peril. We're seeing, feeling and hearing it. It took a minute for folks to tune in."

Campbell said campaigns like Abrams represents a power shift and will have import-

ant implications for African-Americans in 2020 and beyond.

In Florida, after a flurry of lawsuits, uncertainty about the fate of uncounted ballots, and two South Florida counties failing to meet the deadline, a machine recount determined that Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum was unable to catch Republican Ron DeSantis in that gubernatorial contest. Gillum trailed DeSantis by 33,683 votes, a net gain of one vote for Gillum from the unofficial results reported last week. Of eight million votes cast, the margin was a mere 0.41 percent.

Despite the apparent insurmountable lead, Gillum would not concede and called for counting to continue. His lawyer hinted at a lawsuit.

"A vote denied is justice denied — the State of Florida must count every legally cast vote," Gillum said in published reports. "As today's unofficial reports and recent court proceedings make clear, there are tens of thousands of votes that have yet to be counted. We plan to do all we can to ensure that every voice is heard in this process."

There grew a cacophony of calls for Gillum to concede. The Wall Street Journal's Editorial Board called him "ungracious," saying that his refusal to concede was "a display of ill-grace that won't help his political future in Florida."

Ultimately, he conceded saying he would not stop working for fair elections in Florida.

"We wanted to make sure that every vote, including those that were undervotes and overvotes – as long as it was a legally cast vote – we wanted those votes to be counted," Gillum said.

He concluded, "We also want you to know that even though this election may be beyond us, that this – although nobody wanted to be governor more than me – this was not just about an election cycle... This was about creating the kind of change in this state that really allows for the voices of everyday people to show up again in our government, our state, and our communities."

This story includes information from The Tallahassee Democrat, gregpalast.com and NPR.

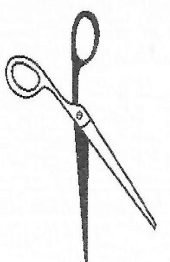
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The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is an African American and Pan-African holiday that is celebrated from December 26 through January 1. The holiday was created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, professor of Africana Studies at California State University, Long Beach. Karenga, an author and scholar-activist, stressed the need to preserve, continually revitalize, and promote African American culture.

The Kwanzaa holiday, which celebrates family, community and culture, has its origins in the first harvest celebrations of Africa from which it takes its name.

The name Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which means "first fruits" in Swahili, a Pan-African language which is the most widely spoken African language.

The first-fruits celebrations are recorded in African history as far back as ancient Egypt and Nubia and appear in ancient and modern times in other classical African civilizations such as Ashantiland and Yorubaland.



The Seven Principles honored during Kwanzaa:

Umoja - Unity: To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

Kujichagulia - Self-Determination: To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.

Ujima - Collective Work and Responsibility: To build and maintain our community together, to make our broth-

ers and sisters problems our problems and to solve them together.

Ujamaa - Cooperative Economics: To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.

Nia - Purpose: To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba - Creativity: To do always as much as we can in the way that we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Imani - Faith: To believe in all our hearts in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday, not a religious one, and is practiced by people of all religious faiths.

For more information about Kwanzaa and the traditions of the celebration visit <http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org>.

Bishop T.D. Jakes Reflects on Slavery and His Nigerian Ancestry

"Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello: Paradox of Liberty" Traveling Exhibit Opens at Dallas African American Museum

By Michael H. Cottman

Urban News Service
(<https://urbannewsservice.com>)

DALLAS – Inside a provocative exhibit about Thomas Jefferson and slavery, Bishop T.D. Jakes was reminded of his own enslaved ancestors.

Jakes, who has visited Africa many times, proudly talked about his Nigerian roots. He said Dr. Henry Louis Gates, a professor of African and African American research at Harvard University, arranged a DNA test which confirmed that Jakes' ancestors were from Nigeria.

"Going back there recently, I went into an area that was predominantly Ibo and it was kind of emotional to me," Jakes said. "Because they made presentations to me – my house is decorated with a lot of African art – and they were telling me this is what your language sounds like."

Jakes said he has a vivid recollection of his great-grandmother who was once enslaved. He was just 10 years old but said he remembers listening to his great-grandmother talk about slavery and his family's history.

"And I think of how so many people look at Africa and they talk about poverty but when I looked at it I thought they are so rich in ways that we are poor," Jakes said. "They know who they are, they know whose they are, they know where they came from, they proudly understand their languages, and in that way we are very poor and so there needs to be a greater ex-



change between us as people because for me it was like regaining a part of myself that was lost."

Jakes is the honorary co-chair of a new traveling exhibit, "Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello: Paradox of Liberty," which will run from Sept. 22 to Dec. 31 at Dallas' African American Museum. The exhibit, which premiered at Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, breaks new ground by focusing in more detail on the life of Sally Hemings who was enslaved with an estimated 400 other men, women and children on Jefferson's 5000-acre Monticello plantation. The exhibit showcases more than 300 artifacts.

Some of the artifacts that appear in the exhibit include, nails made at the nailery, which was run by the enslaved families and became an extremely profitable industry for Jefferson; a tombstone of Priscilla Hemmings that was hand-carved by her husband, Michael Hemmings; (NOTE: spelling with two m's is correct); and china and pottery purchased by the enslaved families at the market.

Some of Jefferson's items on display include a finely carved chess set, his eyeglasses and book stand. Also, a medicine bottle from Paris that may have been brought back by Sally Hemings during her time in France; a portion of a black pot (Jefferson encouraged his slaves to marry and gave them a black pot as a wedding gift) and an arm chair used in the house that is believed to have been made by John Hemings, (correct spelling) a gifted furniture maker.

Meanwhile, Jakes reflected on the artifacts, which conjured images of enslaved Africans aboard slave ships heading from West Africa to the Americas.

"All of the people who got on the boat were not the same people but they had to unify in order to survive under stress," Jakes said. "It's an amazing story when you think about it. They didn't even speak each other's language so well, there was a certain amount of distrust under the planks of the ship, there was a huge enemy above and so in that sandwich dimension of history we survived nonetheless."

"We learned how to communicate with each other," Jakes said. "We learned how

to become a people. We struggle with what to call ourselves – 'darkies' and 'coloreds' and 'niggers' and negroes' and all of these names that were thrust upon us is a reflection of trying to identify who am I," Jakes added.

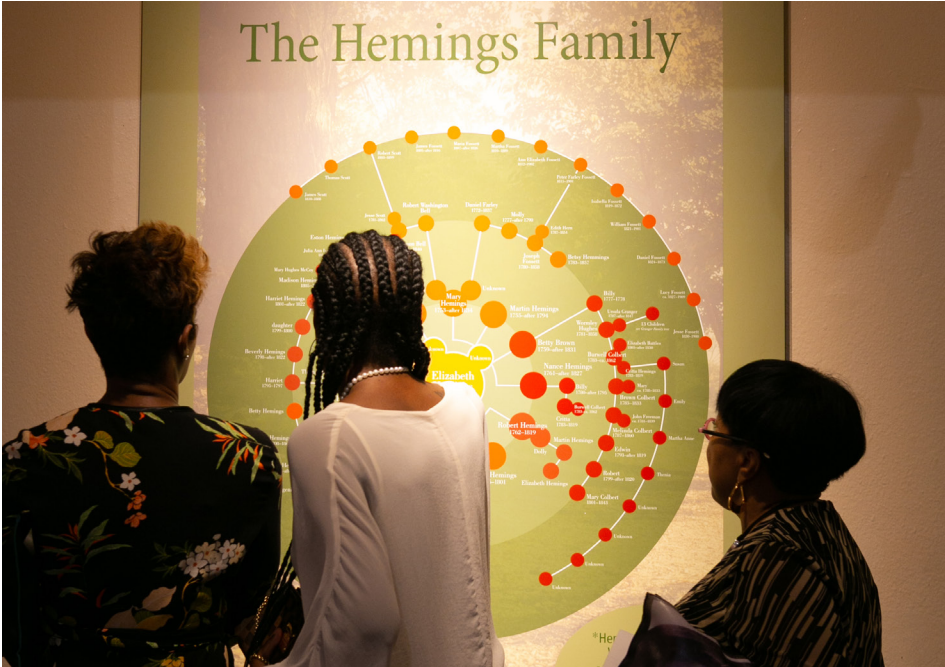
Dallas is the first city to host the exhibit that will feature additional objects that have never left Monticello. Other stops for the exhibit include Detroit, Richmond and the West Coast in 2019.

Jakes said slavery was also about survival, people who were forced into a violent life and stripped of everything, including their names. He added that slavery and contemporary issues of race are forever intertwined, and he stressed the significance of the Dallas exhibition.

After Jakes completed a tour of the exhibit, he sat inside one of the museum's upstairs galleries, glanced at a panel about enslaved African people, and spoke philosophically about slavery's 300-year impact on the world.

"I think that no matter what the color of the people are anytime we allow one group of people to have that much power, abuse perpetuates itself," Jakes said. "Whether you are talking about some of the atrocities that have happened in the history of the Jews or whether you're talking about the apartheid in South Africa, or whether you're talking about slavery and Jim Crow in America."

Photos Courtesy: Joseph G. Thomas and Jose Galvan, City of Dallas; ©Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello



Help Bring the Black Art Jazz Collective to Spokane

Founded in 2011, Imagine Jazz has been offering much more than musical entertainment for the Spokane community. Concerts are only one component of the organization's local efforts, which also include promoting the local music scene, organizing jam sessions, and featuring emerging artists more. The high-quality guest artist concerts and educational events produced by Imagine Jazz are meant to inspire the local scene, promote creative diversity and celebrate the African American contribution to Jazz and improvised music.

On the roster for this January is **The Black Art Jazz Collective**. Imagine Jazz is currently in the process of raising the funds needed to bring this important opportunity to the Spokane community.

The Black Art Jazz Collective is a collaborative ensemble comprised of Jazz's finest rising stars. Each member is a leader in his own right and has also been an integral part of groups led by pioneers of the music including Tom Harrell, Bobby Hutcherson, Wayne Shorter, Ron Carter, Louis Hayes, Al Foster, Freddie Hubbard and many, many others.

The Founding members of the Collective, Wayne Escoffery, Jeremy Pelt, Johnathan Blake and the late bassist Dwayne Burno decided to form a collection of like-minded musicians from the same generation that were dedicated to celebrating African American cultural and political icons, as well as preserving the historical significance of African Americans in Jazz.

The current line-up adds Xavier Davis, James Burton III and Vicente Archer, with some of the musicians teaching in the most



prestigious music schools in the country, including Julliard and the Manhattan School of Music among others.

Imagine Jazz founder Rachel Bade-McMurphy hopes to offer at least two workshops with the group while they are in Spokane, one focused on College musicians and one focused on High School students, and she is seeking educational sponsors.

Bade-McMurphy is also running an online campaign during the month of December to gain 50 new Imagine Jazz members by the end of the year. Proceeds from new Imagine Jazz memberships in the month of December will go to fund The Black Art Jazz Collective.

Imagine Jazz has a solid history of bringing quality events to he area. The first two Imagine Jazz featured events in Spokane were classic jazz concerts with the New York-based groups The Willie Jones III Quintet and The Vincent Herring Quartet.

This fall, Imagine Jazz offered the Spokane community something more modern. On October 3rd, at the Terrain Art Space in the Washington Cracker Building, 85 audience members experienced Blues People. The setting was the perfect platform for alto saxophonist Logan Richardson's electrifying mix of Jazz, Blues, Rock, Metal and beautiful stretch music that transcends conventional boundaries.

Richardson, who lives in Europe, was on a west coast tour with Guitarist Igor Osypov, Bassist Dominique Sanders and Drummer Ryan Lee. The name "Blues People" was inspired from the book Blues People: Negro Music in White America written by Le-roi Jones AKA Amiri Baraka, a book that Richardson says changed his life.

Richardson spoke of this book at a masterclass at Spokane Falls Community College where Blues people worked with students from SFCC, EWU and WSU. He explained

that one of his compositions "The Settlement", depicts what it might have been like post-emancipation if freed slaves truly received the land they were promised and were actually given the freedom they desired. He spoke of 40 acres and a mule and encouraged students to look at all sides of history and strive to gain truths about our past.

Blues People also worked with "Jazz Wires", a student group from Washington State University in this same workshop, where the students were encouraged to perform "as though it was the last time they would ever play". Blues People also visited Eastern Washington University for a convocation performance and clinic on music business and visited KEWU 89.5 for an on-air interview.

Imagine Jazz did not meet their ticket sales goal for the Blues People concert, but despite that they are not planning on giving up anytime soon. Imagine Jazz Founders Rachel Bade-McMurphy and Brendan McMurphy, who ended up personally funding a portion of the expenses, believe in the value of community investment and hope their investment will eventually be returned.

You can support the efforts of Imagine Jazz to bring The Black Art Jazz Collective to Spokane by joining the Imagine Jazz membership club at www.imaginejazz.org or by becoming an Imagine Jazz backer on Patreon. Members will receive tickets, discounts, special members-only online content and more.

For more information visit: www.imaginejazz.org

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Black Violin Visits MLK Center



Black Violin, a multi-genre music group composed of classically trained violinist, Wil B, and violinist, Kev Marcus, made a return visit to Spokane on Saturday, November 17, as a part of their hugely successful CLASSICAL BOOM Tour. But, before their much anticipated concert at the Fox Theater in downtown Spokane, the theater arranged for them to take a detour and visit the Martin Luther King Center to share their story and their music with the community.

What do you want the community to get out of your visit?

Kev Marcus

We want to be able to leave something behind. It's one thing to come into a city and to just perform, but it's another thing to be able to reach the community, to talk to the kids, to talk to everyone and tell them a little bit about our story. Hopefully they gain a little inspiration from it. We feel a necessity and a responsibility to do this everywhere we go, just to make sure that we are giving as much as we receive.

What do you personally get out of doing this?

Wil Baptiste

It's so gratifying to be able to do something that you love, something that you naturally do, but at the same time inspire and uplift people at the same time. There's nothing like it. There's no other joy like it. It's like eating the best ice cream and you eat it over and over, and you don't get fat. It all stays in. It's just amazing. It's a great feeling. That's why we do it.

What do you want the Black community, in particular young Black men, to get out of seeing you? What can they learn from you two?

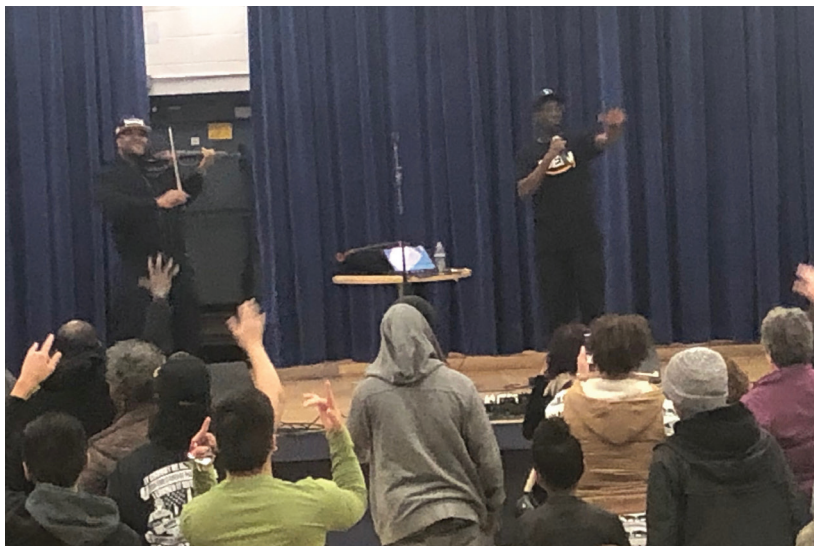
Kev Marcus

Don't get trapped in the stereotype of the Black man. We travel the world, so we see what people's reactions are to Black men, and I think that it can be something that traps you if you let it. When you look on tv and the only Black people that you see with power are athletes and rappers, you feel like that's the only thing that you can be. We're here to tell you that you can do anything that you want. We use our violin as a way to disarm people, to change the narrative of what the Black man is. I think all Black men everywhere need to think about it in that way. How can we change the perception of what a Black man is and don't get caught and trapped in to the societal perception of it. We can do anything that we ever wanted to do. This (points at his skin) is actually something that is a superpower more than it is something that takes away from us, so use the superpower and try to spread your powers even wider, because Black men can do amazing things.

Wil Baptiste

We understand that representation is important. There are not a lot of positive images of us and we understand the power that we have just in terms of the image. Not only that, this thing that has always been considered as over there and now we can take it and we can own it and we can make it ours. Young Black kids see us and they're like, man, there's a bigger world out there besides what I'm given, what I've seen. There's so much more to us. That's the biggest thing that we want young kids who look like us to get. We are you. We look like you. And the world is yours to take.

*For information about Black Violin visit: <http://blackviolin.net>.
For the Fox Theater visit: <https://foxtheaterspokane.org>.*



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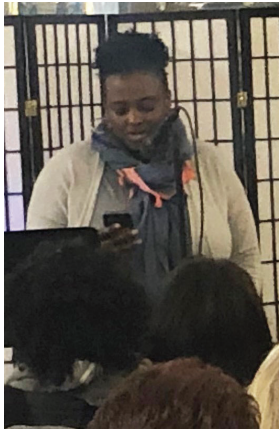
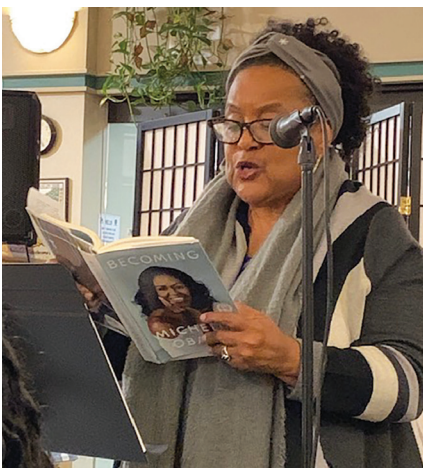
Becoming Michelle Obama

The Black Lens & Aunties Celebrate New Book and Black Women

The Black Lens partnered with Aunties Bookstore on November 13 to celebrate the release of Michelle Obama's new memoir titled: Becoming.

The celebration featured spoken word, reflections and readings from the book from Dr. Jeanne Baynes, Dr. Shari Clarke, Bethany Montgomery, Inga Laurent, Shantell Jackson, Deva Bailey-Logan, Lyn'Marie White and Makenzie Wiley-Bunting, followed by a discussion with the audience.

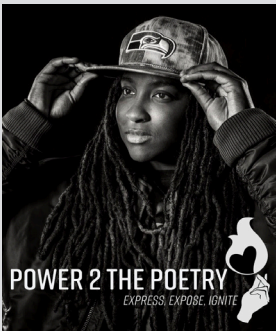
Sponsored by Friends of the Black Lens as a part of Black Lens community outreach .



Becoming

Inspired by Michelle Obama's new book

Written By Bethany Montgomery



I used to look in the mirror
And not be proud of what I see
Society is structured to make me believe
I am not beautiful

Make me believe I cannot be great
I am constantly encountered by hate

And made to feel ashamed
Of who I am
Because my hair is not straight
My skin is not light
My lips are too big
And I am not thin

Will I ever be accepted
Girls that look like me
Have always been neglected
I must be preaching to the choir
The world ain't yet that progressive
I wish all people
But especially white people and black men
Could understand the world
From my perspective

Growing up
You know what I would see
Is that no one who looked like me
Was on tv or in the movies
And if we were
We were never the star
We usually had minor parts
We didn't get the big roles
And even if we did
We wouldn't get paid like so
Never depicted as the hero
In this worlds eyes we equal zero

But I thank God
And I thank us
For the perseverance and the strength
To never give up
We have overcome
And yet still have a long way to go
But I personally thank you
Sojourner, Ida, Rosa, Oprah, Mya, Latifah,
Isa, and Michelle
For setting the example
For being the strong Black women
We can look up to and be proud of
For being the role models we need
For paving the way
For young Black girls like me
To believe
That WE can do anything
To follow our dreams

See we are Black queens
Unbothered by what society thinks
Yes it would be nice
To see more women that look like me
In positions that are highly esteemed
But this is a journey
And yes
We have to take the road less traveled
But we are warriors
And are prepared for this battle

We will not be quiet
We will use our voices
We refuse to be silent
We will share our stories

We will peacefully march
Not riot
Because we are civilized
With no need to resort to violence
We will continue
To walk with our heads held high
And kill them with kindness

When they go low
We go high
Fear is not a proper motivator
Hope
Hope is what always wins out
Fighting fire with fire
Has never been the route
So stop asking why
And instead start asking how
How can we be
The change that we wish to see

So let us start by being
The strong, fearless, determined,
and confident Black women
They don't want us to be
We are women
We are Black
We are beautiful
And we are proud

Throughout history
We have always been good at a lot of things
But we have always been great
At turning things around
and working it all out
Our time is now
We will not sit down
We will stand our ground
We will not stoop to their level
Because we wear the crown
We deserve to be world renowned

We will no longer be in the shadows
We will thrive in the spotlight
We are tough as diamonds
And we shine just as bright
You will give us our credit
For your appropriations
of our trend setting
And our culture
And our features
We have been the unsung heroes
of humanity
But now you will sing our names
Because we are Black queens

And we will always remember
That we are women
We are Black
We are beautiful
And we are proud

We are revolutionary
We are all legends
Right from our inception
Now it's time for the rest of the world
To respect our perspective

We are 'Becoming'
Power 2 The Poetry

**This is my truth in the present moment and my truth is subject to change. 11-12-18*

Photos Courtesy: Robert Lloyd, Wright Way Beauty Supply & The Black Lens

A close-up portrait of a woman with dark, shoulder-length hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a white blazer over a dark top. Her right hand is raised, with her index finger pointing upwards and resting against her chin. The background is a soft, out-of-focus brown.

Recipes for a Balanced Life By Faye McMillan

One of the wonderful aspects of the Christmas season is the celebration of unique and sometimes quirky family “traditions” that make the season special for each one of us.

In my family, we had several Christmas television specials that became part of our celebration ritual. One of my favorites was “A Charlie Brown Christmas.” I loved the music by Vince Guaraldi that undergirded the animated characters and plot. I loved the fact that Charlie Brown finds the lowliest Christmas tree for the pageant, and I loved Linus’s gentle, yet poignant reminder of the true meaning of Christmas. I will never forget his slow walk to the center of the stage with thumb in mouth and blanket trailing behind him.

To this day, his recitation from the second chapter of Luke still gives me goose bumps. Tears of joy and beauty easily fill my eyes as I hear his small, childlike voice proclaiming the powerful message of God's good news for the whole world.

“And the angel said unto them, fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:8-14)

In recalling Linus's recitation, I've been thinking about the message of good news the angels proclaimed to the shepherds that starry night. I think about what a contrast that message is to our prevailing "bad news" messages today. Random violence, terror, suicide, and news of illness and loss of life among friends and family.

It is hard not to feel at times that the world is full of bad news. If we could just take the time to reflect on the good news, the birth of Jesus, Immanuel, God with us is the greatest good news we could ever hope to receive.

Jesus says in John's gospel, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only, begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16).

In the face of the bad news of our world and in our lives, the good news of God should resound in our hearts and minds as we enter the Christmas season. God is with us. God loves us! All are invited to share in the good news.

The good news of God's reign exists even in the midst of crisis. The good news of God's reign offers hope that Immanuel has arrived in Jesus. And even when the news is overwhelmingly bad, the promise resounds: "In the world, you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).

This is indeed good news. So this Christmas season take the time to give the gifts you can't buy or wrap and place underneath a tree: love, forgiveness, acceptance and friendship.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Ingredients

Pastry:

(you can use a ready-made, unbaked 9 inch pie shell)

1-1/4 cups all-purpose flour, 6 ounces
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
4 tablespoon chilled butter (cut into pieces)
1/3 cup chilled vegetable shortening
3 to 5 tablespoons ice water

Pie filling:

1 cup light or dark corn syrup
1 cup brown sugar (packed)
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoon butter melted
3 eggs large, slightly beaten
1 1/2 cups pecan halves

To make Pastry:

1. Combine the flour, salt and sugar; blend well. Add the pieces of butter and shortening and work with a pastry blender until the mixture forms crumbs. Some crumbs should be large, about the size of peas. If you use a food processor, pulse for about 5 to 7 times.

2. Work about 3 tablespoons of ice water into the mixture, then more water, about 1 teaspoon at a time, until the dough begins to hold together when a little is squeezed.

3. Turn mixture out onto a floured surface and press to form a flatten disc. wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for about 30-45 minutes.

4. Roll the dough out into a circle about 2 inches larger than the pie plate (up-



side-down measurement). Fit it into the pie plate and flute the edge as desired. Refrigerate until you are ready to fill the pie.

Filling:

1. Heat the oven to 350F.

2. In a large bowl, combine corn syrup, brown sugar, salt, butter, and vanilla; mix until smooth and well blended.

3. Add the slightly beaten eggs and blend well, stir in pecans.

4. Pour the pecan mixture into the chilled, unbaked pie shell.

5. Bake in the preheated oven for 55 to 65 minutes, or until the filling is set. Check the pie for over-browning after about 40 minutes. If necessary, cover the crust edge with foil ring to prevent excessive browning.

6. Cool pecan pie thoroughly and serve with a dollop of whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.

Give it a try and let me know if you like it. If you don't, please share why not. If you have an idea for a healthy dish, let me know that too. I can be reached through the Black Lens by sending an e-mail to sandy@blacklensnews.com. Put Foods for the Soul in the subject line.

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Kristine Guillaume

Elected President of Harvard's Student Newspaper

Reprinted from Good Black News
(goodblacknews.org)

By Lori Lakin Hutcherson

The Harvard Crimson, Harvard College's daily newspaper, recently reported that Kristine E. Guillaume, Class of 2020, was elected to lead the 146th Guard as the paper's President. Guillaume is the first Black woman to serve as President of The Crimson in its 145-year history.

Guillaume, a joint African American Studies and History and Literature concentrator, is currently one of The Crimson's Central Administration reporters. She has interviewed the last two of the University's Presidents — Drew G. Faust and Lawrence S. Bacow — and worked as part of the reporting team that covered Harvard's 2018 presidential search.

A Queens, New York native, Guillaume is also one of three Chairs of The Crimson's Diversity and Inclusivity committee, responsible for formulating and overseeing initiatives meant to make the paper more diverse and welcoming to students from all backgrounds. Guillaume will begin as President on Jan. 1, 2019.

"I'm definitely proud to be a part of making the Crimson a more welcoming place, and to step into this role as the first Black woman," Guillaume said in an interview with the Boston Globe. "If by taking this role, I help affirm another Crimson staffer's sense of belonging and ownership over the work that they do, I think that makes all of the hard work worth it."

In her new position Guillaume will work as a go-between the Crimson's editorial departments and initiatives, while also steering the



future direction of the paper in the increasingly difficult media landscape. She will now oversee a paper with 320 staffers.

"At Harvard you're in a space that was made for white men, so if you're not the cookie-cutter white man who Harvard was built for, it can be difficult to navigate being here," Guillaume said to CNN. "I want people to think about how to navigate, and feel like they can and get through their education and feel like they do belong here. That's a big thing for me."

Founded in 1873, The Crimson is the oldest continuously published daily college newspaper in the United States and the only breakfast-table daily publication of Cambridge, Mass. The paper is proud to provide news and analysis to a wide range of Harvard affiliates, Cambridge residents, and readers across the nation.

The Crimson selects its leaders through an election process called the Turkey Shoot, in which all outgoing members of the masthead are invited to participate. A candidate for a senior leadership position must receive at least 75 percent of the vote to be elected.

Louisville Chapter Of Black Lives Matter Launches Low-Income Housing Program

By Rickey Riley
(Reprinted from Blavity.com)

When a family in Louisville, Kentucky, needed housing assistance, a local Black Lives Matter chapter stepped in to help.

In August, Lisa Thomas-Lewis was told by the Louisville Metro Housing Authority that there wasn't any housing available which would accommodate her family of seven. Her husband, Michael Lewis, was not allowed to live in their public housing because of his criminal record.

According to Insider Louisville, Thomas-Lewis lived in a neighborhood with better retail outlets and fresher, healthier food options. Now, they are forced to relocate while Michael works to get his record expunged with the help of the Louisville Urban League.

The family went to Black Lives Matter Louisville for help in October. Organizer Chanelle Helm showed the family a house the organization bought as part of its new initiative. The chapter has purchased five homes—two on the South Side and three in west Louisville—to combat rising gentrification. And this is just the beginning.

"We bought our first home at 644 S. 37th St. for \$5,000 in January, and some of the others were donated to us. We have raised about \$50,000 so far to buy more homes and help renovate the ones we have now," Helm told Insider. "We are focusing on vacant houses in the West End because that is where these mamas and babies need help."

A report released on November 14 from Metropolitan Housing shows how gentrification will push out families led by women in the West End area of the city. Rising rent,

increased gentrification and limited affordable housing will only push out low-income Black families. Black Lives Matter Louisville wants homeowners in the west to donate their homes to them instead of the Louisville Metro Landbank Authority.

"The Landbank is for investors, not people in these poor communities where the vacant houses are located. You need the renovation money in the bank to get one of those houses," Helm said. "The families we are working with can't do that. With all of this development going on, the current residents need to be proactive about protecting their communities. We believe housing is a right, not a luxury."

Other chapters are adopting a similar program. Black Lives Matter Cambridge has teamed with housing advocates to provide affordable housing in Massachusetts.

The Black Lives Matter movement started from the killing of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin by neighborhood watchmen George Zimmerman. Since 2012, police brutality, criminal justice reform and mass incarceration have become the primary areas of focus. Co-founder Patrisse Cullors spoke at UC Santa Barbara reflecting on the early days of the movement. "This concept of Black Lives Matter has a lineage. It's a part of the Black Power Movement," she said. "We stand on the shoulders of giants."

The movement has also partnered with the #MeToo movement and the Women's March to advocate for women's rights. And it appears housing and fighting against gentrification are on the docket. "Contrary to the media, a hashtag doesn't start an actual movement. It takes skills; it takes organizing; it takes commitment, and it takes sacrifice," she said.



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Higher Education Excellence in Diversity

Eastern Washington University and Whitworth University Honored with Diversity Awards



Eastern Washington University (EWU) located in Cheney, WA and Whitworth University, located in Spokane, WA, are both recipients of the 2018 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award.

The HEED Award is a national honor that recognizes colleges and universities that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion. The recognition comes from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine, which is the oldest and largest diversity-focused publication in higher education, and as HEED award recipients, both universities were featured in the November 2018 issue of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine.

“I am thrilled that Eastern is receiving recognition for our commitment to inclusive excellence,” said Shari Clarke, PhD, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion at EWU. “The HEED award is affirmation of a broad range of accomplishments and innovative diversity initiatives at Eastern.

Clarke noted the application process was extremely thorough. INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine selected Eastern because it has diversity and inclusion woven into the campus fabric on a daily basis.

Clarke highlighted the university’s Pride Center, Multicultural Center and the many workshops and events that take place on the EWU campus, like 'Dialogues on Diversity', as examples of how Eastern is committed to inclusion efforts year around.

INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine selected Whitworth University based on its many efforts in the recruitment and retention of a diversified population. One example is the annual Intergroup Dialogue and Diversity Education program, in which 24 faculty and staff members participate in a three-day summer workshop on intergroup dialogue and diversity education, followed by monthly meetings through the academic year. Participants develop intergroup dialogue and facilitation skills, learning how to engage in difficult conversations with all members of the community.

The HEED award also recognized the value of several of Whitworth’s student-focused

diversity and inclusion programs. These include cultural-diversity advocates (CDAs) in every resident hall, peer mentoring programs for first-generation and underrepresented students, and the annual Diversity Monologues program.

“We are honored to receive this recognition, and I thank and applaud the successful collective efforts of faculty, staff, students and senior leadership,” says Lorna Hernandez Jarvis, Chief Diversity Officer and Associate Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. “The university’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is so strong because it is anchored on our Christ-centered rationale to seek reconciliation, peace, justice and inclusion.”

In commenting on the application process for the HEED award, Lenore Pearlstein, publisher of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine said, “the HEED Award process consists of a comprehensive and rigorous application that



includes questions relating to the recruitment and retention of students and employees — and best practices for both — continued leadership support for diversity, and other aspects of campus diversity and inclusion.” She noted, “Our standards are high, as we take a detailed approach to reviewing each application in deciding who will be named a HEED Award recipient.”

There were 96 recipients of the 2018 HEED Award. Other recipients include Central Washington University, Oregon State University, Texas Tech University, Kent State University and University of Colorado at Boulder.

EWU is the public university located twenty minutes from Spokane, WA. It has an enrollment of 12,000 students and offers 78 programs of study, including 45 graduate programs, two educational specialist degrees and one applied doctorate. Whitworth University is a private liberal arts university affiliated with the Presbyterian church. It has an enrollment of 3,000 students and offers more than 100 undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

For more information about the 2018 HEED Award, visit insightintodiversity.com.



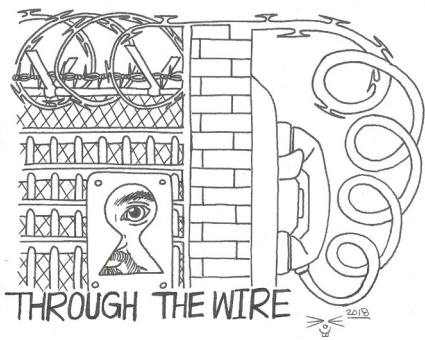
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THE BLACK PRISONERS CAUCUS

Airway Heights

What Does a Healthy Relationship Look Like?

By Harry “Brocq” Whitman

The Black Prisoners Caucus has been “Reaching Out” to you from Coyote Ridge over the past year and today we are speaking to you “Through the Wire...” from Airway Heights Correctional Center. The location is different but the dialogue remains the same, a reality check of insights, motivation and positive food for the mind and conscience. So, let’s get at it!

I always have a good laugh when I see a psychologist on tv talking about how to have a healthy relationship. The question I have is: what does a healthy relationship look like? The truth is that a good relationship looks like whatever a couple together decides it should look like.

The society that we live in transmits to us every hour, every day, through a wide variety of media sources, images and messages that distort our concept of what real love and affection really are. Love is often portrayed with images of sexuali-

ty and materialism, with hype and other forms of artificiality.

In the past 50 years, life has become more complicated. Longer working hours, intensified by grueling commutes and more traffic, the increased cost of housing, food, and health care, rising credit and debt, and the combined responsibilities of work and care for the family are only a few of the sources of stress in our fast paced modern lives.

In spite of the new technologies designed to connect us, information overload and round the clock accessibility via the internet and cellphones have reduced much of our communication to the equivalent of text messaging. We are stretched to the limit with little energy for our personal lives. Despite increased independence and opportunities for success at work, we are often left with a sense of isolation and exhaustion at home.

The unprecedented levels of stress we are experiencing is taking a toll on our re-

lationships. We are often too busy or too tired to sustain feelings of attraction, motivation, and affection. Everyday stress drains our energy and patience and leaves us feeling too exhausted or overwhelmed to enjoy and support each other. We are often too busy to see what is obvious.

Every relationship requires making adjustments, compromises, and sacrifices, but we do not have to give up our ourselves. Instead, we can arrive at a reasonable and fair compromise. Life is not about having everything our own way whenever we want it. We experience the opening of our hearts when we share.

Our biggest problem at home is that women expect men to react and behave the way women do, while men continue to misunderstand what women really need. Without a correct and positive understanding of these differences, most couples gradually begin to feel they are on their own, rather than relying on the support they felt at the beginning of their relationship.

Men love to solve problems, but when their efforts are misdirected and go unappreciated, they lose interest over time. When this challenge is correctly understood, both partners become more skillful in helping each other cope with the burden of increasing stress in our lives.

When a plane takes off and flies on autopilot, it will arrive at its destination. Though the course seems perfect, it is not. At every point on its route, a plane’s course varies due to changing wind speed and plane resistance. It is never perfectly on target but it is generally moving in the right direction. A plane on autopilot constantly makes small adjustments to correct the direction.

Relationships are the same way. No one is ever perfect, but your partner can be the perfect person for you. If we continue to correct and adjust ourselves, we can create a lifetime of love.

Contact The Black Prisoners Caucus with any comments or questions: www.bpceast@gmail.com

Rethinking the Stubborn Challenges of U.S. Incarceration

Part Two of Two-Part Series:

By Hazel Trice Edney

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund has described the U. S. government’s use of for-profit private prisons as “an embarrassing and degrading stain on our democracy.” The organization contends “the maintenance and treatment of those who the state assigns to incarceration is the responsibility of the state, not private entities, and especially not those driven by a profit motive.”

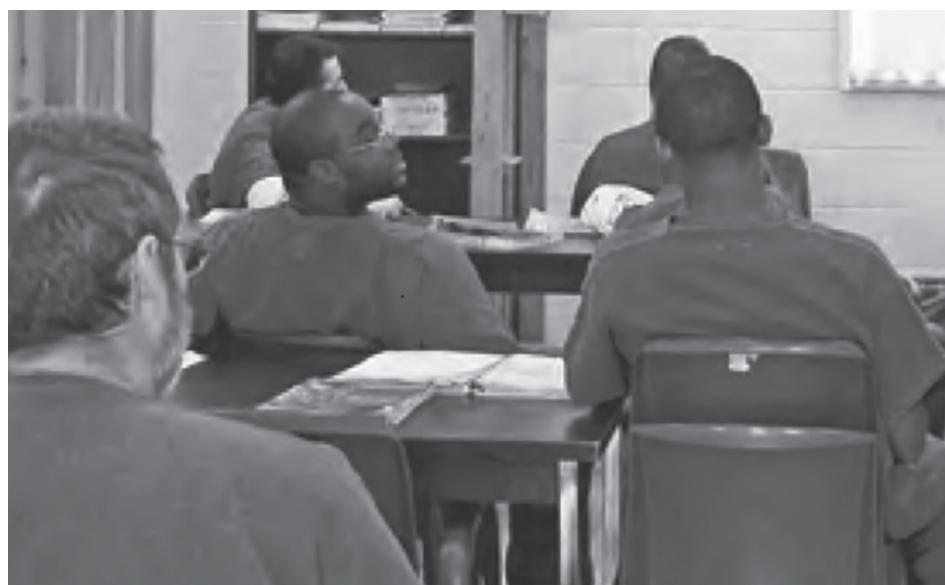
On purely economic or commercial terms, the concept of a for-profit prison appears to encourage mass incarceration and therefore more injustice, the key issues fueling angst against the private prison industry.

In fact, the private companies are not fueling the incarceration. Rather, they are contracted by federal and state governments to grapple with it. One such company appears to have discovered at least part of the solution – a part that manages both prison populations and recidivism.

Derrick D. Schofield, Ph.D., Executive Vice President, Continuum of Care (COC) and Reentry Services at GEO Care, a private prison operator, underscores that the firm “does not go looking for prisoners” but simply serves clients. Those clients are federal and state governments, whose facilities are sometimes inadequately staffed and/or overcrowded.

Scholars have identified several factors that largely account for the growing prison population. Those factors include enduring economic injustice and racial profiling. It also includes “get-tough-on-crime,” “zero tolerance” and so-called “war on drugs” laws enacted in the 1990s.

In this regard, aggressive prosecutors are not only better funded than public defenders but also have incentives to be seen as



hard on crime by the public who pays their salaries and – in some instances – who elects them. Therefore, people convicted of non-violent crimes have often been sent to prison under draconian “mandatory minimum” sentences that essentially tie the hands of judges who send them away to “correctional” institutions.

“This service is going to be provided by government or private agencies,” says Adam Hasner, Executive Vice President for Public Policy for the GEO Group, Inc. “The question is who can do it better? Who can get better results? Who’s returning citizens back to the community more prepared to be successful?”

Hasner says 94 COC inmates at GEO’s Graceville Correctional Center in Jackson County, Florida have earned their GEDs this year alone.

“I was in special ed my whole life,” said one COC program inmate. “I’ve had nothing but support since I’ve been here.”

Another program inmate, on track for release in just a few months, says he has been imprisoned for more than 30 years. “I’m not in here for being good,” he says wry-

ly. But when he came in, he says he was “functionally illiterate”. Now, “I finally got my GED...It raised my self-esteem. It helped me to change my thinking; helped me to believe in myself more...You’re not just a body, but a mind too.”

Yet another recalls his period of incarceration under the public Department of corrections. “They just park you in there and store you like cattle,” he said.

The steady increase in the percentage of the U.S. population behind bars in recent decades; especially the disproportionate percentage of African-American and Hispanic inmates, is also deeply enmeshed with America’s history of slavery.

Therefore, regardless of the hope that such changes might portend for U.S. incarceration practices, many civil rights leaders, human rights advocates, and policy makers remain staunchly opposed to the concept of private prisons.

Khalil Abdullah, a former Executive Director of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL), who once conducted extensive research on private prisons for NBCSL, is emphatic: “No one should profit from the

incarceration or warehousing of another human being.” Invoking the horrific transport of enslaved Africans to the West Indies, Abdullah calls private prisons the “third middle passage.” In his view and the views of others, this issue transcends discussions about GEDs, addiction counseling and better food. For Abdullah, the question is not only why public prisons are establishing the necessary programs, but this: “What’s the moral principle at play here?”

The moral objections to the very concept of for-profit prisons has fueled lawsuits by human rights groups alleging atrocities, including ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) detainees making as little as \$1 an hour while in their facilities. GEO recently threatened to sue one such group, Florida-based Dream Defenders, for liable. But the ACLU contends that the civil rights group remains within legal bounds.

Though privately owned and privately run, prisons were not established to remedy America’s historic and enduring racial inequality or to revamp the American criminal justice system, the success of GEO Care and other companies in shifting from punishment to rehabilitation appears to offer lessons across the penal system. By helping inmates address addiction, develop meaningful skills needed by employers, and by dealing with some of the psychological and emotional disorders that can lead to repeated criminal behavior, GEO Care has decreased recidivism rates. These innovations alone could gradually change the racial disparities in prison population; therefore benefit society as a whole.

“There is a big difference in what the state is attempting to do and what we’re doing,” says Wilton Cloud, Graceville’s Assistant Warden of Programs, who retired from Florida’s Department of Corrections where he spent the last 10 years as an assistant warden.

Continued on Page 19

Tongues of Fire

By Beverly Spears



The Best of Times. The Worst of Times. Which is it?

I recently told a friend that this column is dedicated to exploring the intersection between politics and spirituality. Her response was, “Well, you must not have much to write about then.” It’s easy to understand why one would think that finding, or more authentically, *recognizing* Spirit at work in the contentious social and political reality that is America today, might seem like a ‘mission impossible.’ But the disorienting, altered universe in which many of us find ourselves is proving to be extraordinarily fertile ground for my own personal spiritual reflection and growth, and my exploration of the collective spiritual consciousness of the Nation. Spiritual inspiration and insights come to me from diverse sources, situations and events – from sacred religious texts to pop-culture movies, and from comic strips to classic novels.

So, when the opening line from Charles Dickens’ novel *A Tale of Two Cities* kept popping into my head, I figured Spirit was leading and I followed. The words “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” are familiar to us, though I wonder if most people under forty even know where they came from. Set in the late 18th century against the background of the French Revolution, *A Tale of Two Cities* is sharp political commentary told through the personal lives of several protagonists tragically caught up in the extremes of two opposing ideologies.

It is the story of the obscene wealth, economic oppression, social indifference and cruelty on the part of the ruling French aristocracy. This eventually resulted in the oppressed populace of France overthrowing the ruling class by means of violent revolution and mob rule. The ultimate fruits of the French Revolution were social reform and democracy, but they came at a bloody price and there was plenty abuse of power to go around. *A Tale of Two Cities* is a story that reflects the worst of human behavior on the part of both the oppressor and the oppressed.

I read *A Tale of Two Cities* years ago, and I’ve seen the 1935 film adaptation of this classic novel more than once. I’m glad I explored it again, because I was reminded that Dickens’ novel, while casting a brutally critical eye on both sides of a conflict, also embodies a deep and abiding spiritual message. Set in a time of intensely dangerous social-political upheaval, it is a story of human resilience and connectedness, and the power of Truth, compassion, and self-sacrificing love.

When I put that so familiar first sentence back into the context of the whole first paragraph, I was struck by the timelessness and universality of it.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair; we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way — in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

“In short, the period was so far like the present period” Wow! I had to read it again to make sure I hadn’t added those words myself.

America is a deeply divided nation. There are two dominant, opposing and entrenched political ideologies. America is in reality a sub-divided nation, especially in terms of systemic racism, ever-growing economic disparity, xenophobia, and discrimination based on gender identification. Even within the predominant ideologies, there are opposing factions.

It is the worst of times. The news headlines tell the story. “Hate crimes rose 17 percent

last year according to new FBI poll” -- “Has America Gone Insane?” -- “Rock bottom Supreme Court fight reveals a country on the brink.” America is in an undeclared civil war, and if only it were just a war of words. But shots are being fired from the extreme faction of one side. Innocents are being killed by white supremacists in the name of unabashed hate and bigotry. Gun violence surges, while majority political party leadership turns a blind eye to the crisis.

The President of the United States offers thinly veiled encouragement to racists and openly promotes xenophobia. He enforces policy to tear children from the arms of their parents and lock them away. We are experiencing catastrophic weather in large part due to global warming, and this President is unwilling to acknowledge this environmental time bomb. Democratic processes are threatened by domestic voter suppression, more wide-spread than it has ever been, and the interference of foreign powers in our elections system is yet another reality ignored by our Commander-in-Chief.

Is this the darkness of the tomb or the womb? Is there a spring of hope in this winter of despair? Will wisdom prevail against foolishness? Is there within this hell some heaven?

Yes! Because it is also *the best of times*.

Last month’s mid-term elections are evidence that democracy, far from dead, still has the power to thwart creeping totalitarianism and autocracy. The number of women, women of color, LGBTQ people, and champions for social and environmental justice that have now been elected in all levels of public office, is cause for hope. We are exposing and mounting strong challenges to voter suppression. We are gaining ground in gun control efforts. We set aside our political and religious differences in service to our common humanity when we gather

together to mourn the violent and senseless taking of human lives. We take to the streets and occupy government buildings in non-violent resistance to social injustice, hate and bigotry.

In the movie *Contact*, a 1997 film dedicated to the life and work of astrophysicist and astronomer Carl Sagan, an advanced alien life form says to a human scientist with whom it has made contact, “You’re an interesting species, an interesting mix. You’re capable of such beautiful dreams and such horrible nightmares. You feel so lost, so cut off, so alone, only you’re not. See, in all our searching, the only thing we’ve found that makes the emptiness bearable is each other.”

We are indeed an interesting and complex species. For us it is always the best of times and the worst of times. In a post-modern world, our tendency is to swing from one extreme to the other. The natural world always seeks balance; post-modern humans are notoriously bad at achieving balance, let alone maintaining it.

We are capable of great compassion and inclusivity, but paradoxically we must constantly remain conscious of our human proclivity for retaliation, misuse of power, and our tendencies to think that our tribe alone has the right answers. If political power remains the end game, America remains morally bankrupt.

What I have come to realize is that there really is no such thing as an intersection between politics and spirituality. There is only Spirit; there is only the Great Whole in which everything exists. Our suffering and rage arise from our inability to recognize that we ALL live and move and have our being in God ... Divine consciousness, or whatever name, image, or concept you have for that vast creative energy, is above all else, Relational.

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University Study: Teachers Impact The Pathway to College for Black Students

(Source: *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, jbhhe.com*)

A new study from researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, American University in Washington, D.C., the University of California, Davis, and the University of Connecticut has found that Black students who have at least one Black teacher in elementary school are much more likely to graduate high school and go on to college.

The researchers found that Black students who had just one Black teacher by third grade were 13 percent more likely to enroll in college, and those who had two Black teachers were 32 percent more likely to go to college.

Additionally, the research found that students who had at least one Black teacher during their K-3 years, were more likely to be described by their fourth grade teacher as “persistent” or that they “made an effort” and “tried to finish difficult work.”

Previous studies from this research team had found that having at least one Black



elementary school teacher reduced the probability of dropping out by 29 percent for low-income Black students and by 39 percent for very low-income Black male students.

Another recent study by the same research team found that teachers’ beliefs about a stu-

dent’s college potential can predict whether or not that student actually attends college.

For every 20 percent increase in a teacher’s expectations, the chance of that child actually finishing college increased by 6 percent for White students and by 10 percent for Black students.

Previous studies by this team had found that White teachers expected significantly less academic success than Black teachers when they were asked to evaluate the same Black student.

“Both studies underscore the importance of gaps in information, expectations, and thus aspirations,” said co-author Nicholas Papageorge, an assistant professor of economics at Johns Hopkins University. “Many Black students from low-income families encounter few college graduates who look like them. They may conclude college isn’t something to strive for. Black teachers can counteract that view, acting as role models that provide a clear example that Black students can go to college.”

The two studies were both published by the National Bureau of Economic Research. The first study, “*The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers*,” may be accessed at <https://www.nber.org/papers/w25254>, and the second study, “*Teacher Expectations Matter*,” may be accessed <https://www.nber.org/papers/w25255>.

Heads Up (Spokane)

By Kiantha Duncan

The Line in the Sand

It's that time of year again. You know the one, when we naturally start talking about what we want to do differently, what things we plan on changing and who we are hoping to become in the new year. Just like clockwork, every December we feel an internal mechanism tugging at us to make a change.

Most of us, if we were honest with ourselves, can take inventory of the past year's resolutions that we made and did not achieve.

Anyone who knows me knows that I love bread. Warm bread specifically with a light smear of Belgium butter to be exact. I remember one year swearing off bread because I wanted to work on losing a few pounds. In my mind it made perfect sense to deny myself something that gave me so much pleasure because certainly it worked against my goal of losing weight. I look back now and laugh at how silly of a resolution that was and how silly resolutions are all together.

You see, I didn't need to write off bread all together, although it seemed the right thing to do considering my goals. What I needed to do was be real with myself and accept that I had to be mindful when eating bread because too much of it would sabotage my weight loss goals.

But, like most people, somehow that didn't seem sufficient. I needed to draw a hard line in the sand and write off all bread and all yeast products. So, I did. I did it. I vowed to never eat bread again. No bread. Not a bun, a roll, a croissant or bagel. And guess what? It worked. It sure did. It was at least a week before I had another piece of delicious warm bread.

But what had changed?

I was so committed. I was doing it to lose weight and certainly I had not lost enough weight in one week that I could justify eating bread again. What happened to my hard line in the sand? Why could I not keep my commitment?

This is something most of us have experienced. Making the resolution, committing to it and ultimately failing at it. Maybe you resolved to give up something in your life. Maybe it was a behavior that you committed to changing in the new year and try as you may, you were unable to keep your new-found commitment. It happens to everyone but there is hope.

The reason hard line commitments typically don't work is because they are made out of despair. We choose the things that are challenges for us and we put them front and center by creating a resolution around it. What if we simply changed our way of thinking. What if we gave ourselves permission to soften the line per se? What if the line was taken away all together and instead we embraced the behavior in us that is "challenging" from a place of compassion?

You see, I love bread and while I understand that a diet rich in carbs is not good for me, I don't need to write off something that I love. I don't need to create a ridged agreement or resolution to keep myself in-line surrounding said thing. I simply need to be mindful in my interaction with it.

It's totally fine to have things in your life that you want to work on. That means that you are doing the work mentally to evolve and grow. Keep in mind that you



deserve compassion, care and kindness and you deserve to give those things to yourself.

Draw softer lines, erasable lines even. Work on the things you need to work on and simply resolve to be aware of spaces in which you can improve. Make changes that will allow you to show up as your best self and for God's sake- be gentle with yourself. That's really the only resolution any of us needs.

Happy Holidays- Duncan

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Rethinking U.S. Incarceration

(Continued From Page 17)

He recalled a recent conversation with a former participant in the COC program that he happened to see in a local McDonald's. "He thanked us about the program. He said he's got a good shot now. He's got custody of his kids, he's got a job – and that was just like last week," Cloud said.

Overburdened state departments of corrections and overcrowded prisons are often unable to do anything but warehouse inmates. With an inmate population that has tripled more than twice since 1970, overcrowding is now epidemic. The U.S. Justice Department has issued deeply disturbing reports about maintenance, security and services as state budgets fail to keep pace with the increased inmate population.

As a result, many correctional institutions now struggle to meet minimal health and safety standards, with plumbing and ventilation systems being the most susceptible to breakdowns. What little money earmarked for maintenance is often diverted to fill operational shortfalls due largely to overcrowding. Treatment for addictions, counseling, educational programs and job training are lacking in many systems and recidivism rates are high.

On the other hand, at a fraction of the cost it would take to build more public prisons, GEO Care and other private companies provide an alternative that can be a catalyst for change in the nature of incarceration. In contrast to the often-dismal prisons operated by governments in many southern states, every one of GEO's facilities are air conditioned. Nearly every one of GEO's facilities are less than 25 years old, while only a third of state correctional facilities are less than 25 years old.

GEO's facilities have a total of 800 academic and vocational classrooms, all of which have Smartboards for

interactive learning. With daily attendance of more than 24,000 in vocational programs and 12,000 in academic programs, on average, inmates at GEO facilities earned 2,615 high school equivalency degrees and were awarded 7,814 vocational certifications.

In addition, the GEO Continuum of Care program seeks to address what often contributes to the commission of crime and recidivism, substance abuse and addiction. Part of the \$10 million allocated for the COC program has resulted in the completion of 16,632 substance abuse treatments, according to the company's annual report.

Regardless of the diversity of opinions on the morality of privately owned prisons, most sides likely agree that there is nothing that can be done quickly and easily to change the bleak reality of serving time in the United States. However, just as charter schools or private hospitals have maintained their existence as alternatives to their public counterparts and experiment with innovations to improve education or health care, some privately run correctional institutions have apparently established ways to make incarceration more humane and decrease the odds that inmates will return.

Though only about 10 percent of state prisoners are in private facilities, in the long run correctional programs offering more human treatment may not only establish models for public prisons to possibly emulate, but also lead to safer communities.

Hasner says GEO Care is not claiming to work magic. But they have hired people with decades of experience in state prisons and government agencies, who he calls "the best of the best."

The bottom line is success after release says Schofield. "Ultimately the goal is sustainability," he says. "Not just getting out, but staying out."



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OUR VOICES

Black People Need Birthright Citizenship

From Weekly Freedom Rider Column.

By Margaret Kimberley

(blackagenda.com) If white nationalists are allowed to abolish birthright citizenship, they will immediately move to de-Americanize as many Blacks as possible, for criminal convictions or poverty.

The 14th Amendment of the Constitution guarantees citizenship to all persons born in the United States. This Reconstruction era legislation was passed in 1868 and subsequent court cases established that the rule applies to all, regardless of parents' birthplace or their legal status as residents.

Birthright citizenship has been under constant attack and for years there have been calls to end it. The hot button issues of undocumented people having citizen children or birth tourism by wealthy foreigners cause endless feelings of resentment. Those feelings are misguided but understandable when coming from Black Americans. The most vulnerable group is often marginalized by new arrivals, even sometimes by Black immigrants from other nations.

Yet the irony is that there is no other group more in need of birth right citizenship protection. Donald Trump's latest gambit to end it brings out the red meat loving MAGA crowd. Despite his claims, however, a president cannot change any constitutional provision by executive order. Congress would have to approve by a super majority of 2/3 votes in both houses followed by 3/4 of the state legislatures. Trump is again guilty of spreading ignorance and misinformation but that isn't the worst aspect of this issue. Now there is very deep and dangerous confusion among Black people that didn't exist before.

If birthright citizenship were to disappear, Black people would be victims along with the immigrant babies who are disparaged so badly. Children born to undocumented parents would be the first target but Black people would follow close behind. If birthright were no longer the determining factor in citizenship status it could be changed or even disappeared altogether.

Black Americans would be subject to racist whim as in the Dominican Republic, where thousands of Haitian descended persons had their citizenship rights moved with the stroke of a pen. Other countries that had birthright citizenship ended it when the tipping point of Brown people became too much. European nations, such as the United Kingdom, France and Ireland all ended birthright citizen-



ship when they felt threatened by the presence of newborn Brown and Black children.

White Americans know that Black people aren't going anywhere. But the presence of an unprotected class of some 30 million people is a fantasy they have long desired. If birth didn't determine citizenship, any criteria could be used to take it away. Criminal conviction might end citizenship rights. Poverty could be the determining factor or anything that white nationalists wanted to propose.

But the result of miseducation and misguided thinking has brought about the unthinkable. Right wing talking points are absorbed by everyone if repeated long enough and racist terms like anchor babies and chain migration are now uttered by some Black people too. There are people willing to risk their own rights because they are angry about birth tourist Chinese and Russians or the undocumented having citizen children.

The right wing is aware of this new dynamic and some propose ending birthright citizenship while carving out protections for descendants of enslaved Americans. They may be evil but they are not stupid. They know that those words are magic to the ears of millions of people who watch as what is left of their economic security disappears. Immigrant blaming has become a default position in a country whose people are rarely offered any beneficial systemic change.

This retrograde foolishness is a factor because of political failure. Like all fascistic doctrine, it thrives when basic needs and human rights are attacked by powerful interests. The increasing right wing nature of American politics impacts every group, even the one least likely to support conservative doctrines.

In any case Black citizenship rights are always tenuous. In every outcome we lead in the bad and trail behind in the good. We are the most likely to be discriminated against in the work place or to be killed by the police. Our very communities are taken away in the gentrification onslaught and we are physically displaced. But these attacks make it even more crucial that our rights be left untouched.

We should be under no illusions that Trump lovers would confine their hostility to babies. We have seen this movie before and we know the ending. The Reconstruction era itself was a brief moment that was savagely put down by white segregationists. Their rule lasted for nearly 100 years before the liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s ended it.

But that progress was also short lived. The Voting Rights Act is now null and void and the segregationists are back in the driver's seat. The end of Jim Crow brought about mass incarceration as a replacement mechanism for subjugating the Black population. There is no reason to believe that changes to birthright citizenship would result in anything positive for Black people.

Instead of saying that Donald Trump is the broken clock that is right occasionally, we should be working on an effective political movement. All Americans are moving backward in the endlessly rightward political lurch. Americans are overcome by debt peonage with no guarantee of living wage employment, housing, or health care. The energy used to defend Trump and the Koch brothers on this one point would be better spent on a much needed political movement for this century.

But that requires struggle and hard work. We will even have to struggle with one another as the system circles the drain. One thing is for certain. Black people will suffer the most if the doctrine of birthright citizenship is changed in any way.

Margaret Kimberley is a Black Agenda Report (BAR) Editor and Senior Columnist. Her Freedom Rider column appears weekly in BAR, and is widely reprinted elsewhere. She maintains a frequently updated blog as well at <http://freedomrider.blogspot.com>. Ms. Kimberley lives in New York City, and can be reached via e-Mail at Margaret.Kimberley@BlackAgendaReport.com.

Respect



By Dr. E. Faye Williams, Esq.

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - A few years before Aretha Franklin sang "Respect." Before her, Otis Redding's version had a laudable meaning, too. When Aretha sang "Respect" in 1967, she turned the song into something women have never let go. The song became a powerful anthem

for many, but more so for Black women. It still resonates with us today. Her version was not just about resonating with our civil rights. It also resonated with our feminine side. Anyway, you look at it, "Respect" is a most powerful song for Black people, especially for Black women.

Whenever we hear that song, no matter who else likes it, we know she made it for us. Today we are still crying out for respect. When I hear Black men and women getting rich at the expense of Black women, it's painful. Too many

rappers have taken the 30 pieces of silver to denigrate us, and I'll be the first to admit, it's done not only by men, but by a growing number of Black women rappers.

If you've ever listened to the vulgarity in some of the songs, you can be sure those who are backing them financially or otherwise never intended for us to believe they're talking about women other than Black women. Yet, it's the Black woman who has given birth to them, nursed them to adulthood while she herself may have had little or no joy in life, but she cared about her sons and daughters to the extent that she could without ever complaining. Life most likely had not treated her with respect, but she gave the best she had to her children.

Unfortunately, some of them grew to be influenced by outside influences who taught them and paid them to disrespect their mothers, daughters, nieces, wives and girlfriends. It's time for us to get back to promoting RESPECT for Black women and girls.

During this past week, the National Congress of Black Women joined with Bob Law (Chair of National Black Leadership Alliance) and Kwabena Rasuli (Chair of Clear the Airwaves Project) to once again work to end the travesty of what negative rapping is doing to our community—especially to Black women. Aretha has left us, but our desire for respect is still with us.

Bob Law reminds us that our ancestors have won every challenge they've seriously taken on. There was a time we were in slavery. They brought us up from slavery. We now have a right to be educated. We now have a right to non-segregated housing. Once we couldn't vote; now we can. There's more that our ancestors did, but you get the idea. Our ancestors made a difference then, and we have a duty to make a difference now. We must change the conditions under which our children grow. Some believe they can only make a living by denigrating our people—especially women.

It's time for us to support conscious rappers/artists who work to perfect our community while others try to tear us down. More information is forthcoming. We're tired of begging radio stations to stop promoting filthy lyrics about us. We're tired of begging advertisers to stop sustaining them while playing filthy, racist, misogynist music 24 hours a day. We met with many powerful women this past week where media chose not to carry our story—but our ancestors didn't have supportive media either—but the word got out. Action followed—and we can do it again.

It's time to "Wake Up and Stay Woke". Shortly we'll be announcing specifically what we're asking you to do. The time has come for us to demand respect with more than our words.

(Dr. E. Faye Williams is President of the National Congress of Black Women. She's also host of "Wake Up and Stay Woke" on WPFM-FM 89.3, in Washington, DC)

OUR VOICES

A Requiem for 'White Women' Which the National Review Says Is a ‘Disparaging Term’

By Michael Harriot

(theroot.com) On Sunday, Oct. 14, Kyle Smith, the National Review’s critic-at-large, penned an opinion column alerting the magazine’s conservative readership of a disturbing new trend. Smith’s article lamented the fact that Democrats and people on “the left,” including this writer, are now slandering a sacrosanct segment of American society with an insidious, previously unknown racial slur: “White women.”

White people are free to speak about the “Black vote,” “Black family instability,” Black neighborhoods,” and of course, a favorite subject of the National Review, “Black on Black crime.” But apparently, calling a thing exactly what it is, is a slur now. According to the rice-paper-thin skinned right-wingers, aside from the “w-w words” (I am nothing if not respectful), one should never refer to white men as “white men,” or call a racist a “racist.”

Curiously using a photograph of two women of color to illustrate his point, Smith warns us that this malicious phrase has transformed “the party of equality into a hierarchy of victimhood.” Still worried that his collection of snowflakes may not have yet melted into a sufficient puddle of white tears, Smith continued building his stockpile of sanctimonious bullshit by adding:

“It wouldn’t be terribly difficult, in a nation of 300 million, to come up with five examples of black men who had murdered white women, but if you wrote an essay entitled ‘Why Black Men Keep Murdering White Women’ you would rightly be barred from writing for just about any reputable journalistic outfit. The intellectual error of making insidious generalizations about large groups of people based on superficial characteristics is obvious. So is the moral error.”

So let us begin.

First, we shall dismiss his most incendiary racist false equivalence by agreeing that it would be incredibly easy to come up with five Black men who have murdered white women. In fact, even if every one of the 4,935 Black people arrested for murder in 2016 (the latest year for which FBI figures are available), murdered a white woman, it would mean that, based on U.S. Census numbers, .01 percentage of Black people killed a white woman. Not one percent, but one percent of one percent.

Smith knew what he was doing by invoking the statistically insignificant specter of Black murderers. And by summoning the sum of white fears in a not-so-subtle attempt at race-based fearmongering, he disproved his own point.

Instead of blowing on his high-pitched dog whistle in an embarrassingly shallow attempt at playing savior to the second-place finishers in the white supremacy Olympics, Smith could’ve easily proven that white women were not worthy of derision by pointing at the countless times they have eschewed their own safety, comfort and social status for the greater good of their fellow man.

Oh, wait. He can’t do that.

There has never been a moment in the history of this country where white women have collectively stepped out of the cozy shade provided by white supremacy to stand up for anything other than their own whiteness. Not during slavery. Not during Jim Crow. Not yesterday. Not a single time.

Unlike Kyle Smith’s Black man murder fantasy, it was not an inconsequential percentage of white women who hid behind the opaque safety of voting booth curtains to hand our country over to a man who openly and loudly displays every vari-



ation of racism. It was 52 percent. It was most white women.

Maybe they were high off the pain meds that alleviated the self-induced carpal tunnel syndrome after constantly patting themselves on the back for electing the first Black president and creating a post-racial America, despite the fact that most white women didn’t vote for Obama. They co-opted the Black woman-created #MeToo movement but stiff-armed the Black victims of sexual misconduct. They benefit the most from affirmative action while hating it just the same.

This is what most white women do.

Although they staged the largest protest in American history after the election of Donald Trump, half still approve of the job that Trump is doing, according to the latest Harris/ORC poll. They will flood the streets and walk out of classrooms after mass shootings, but are noticeably silent when it comes to Black lives. After chanting “Believe Women,” they overwhelmingly voted for Roy Moore. Half of them believe Republicans acted fairly in the Kavanaugh hearings, according to that same Harris Poll.

White women’s lies sent the Scottsboro boys to death row. A white woman was the cause of one of the earliest and most treacherous acts of racial terrorism in American history, when a mob bombed and burned the Greenwood section of Tulsa, Okla., called “Black Wall Street.” In fact, many historians mark the beginning of the civil rights era at the exact moment that Carolyn Bryant conjured up the lie that led to the heinous murder of 15-year-old Emmett Till and then hid it in the shadows of her evil heart for 62 years.

Like a white woman.

Conspicuously absent in Kyle Smith’s pearl-clutching opinion piece about the people who use the term “white women” to accuse white women of doing white women shit, is one important question:

Where is the lie?

I would not be offended if Kyle Smith called a Black murderer a “Black murderer.” I wouldn’t even be offended if Smith referred to me as a “murderous Black thug” because I know I have never murdered anyone. But many of the aggrieved white women who object to being characterized by such a despicable but accurate insult have actually done all of the things they are accused of doing.

And that’s where this writer comes in.

In describing the growing disrespect for white women in America, Smith wrote: “A writer for The Root castigated Taylor Swift because ‘like some white women, she uses her privilege to not be involved until she’s directly affected.’”

That was me.

In his rush to defend white womanhood, Smith might have overlooked the fact that the word “some” was right there in the sentence. He also may have missed when I elaborated on Taylor Swift’s beautiful Instagram message on the evening of October 7 (*please remember that date*). In all fairness, Smith may not have seen this explanation:

Taylor Swift knew that she had been made into an icon by the alt-right. When a tiny little website called Popfront suggested Swift should disavow the white supremacists using her as their mascot, her lawyers wrote a threatening letter to them:

“Ms. Swift has no obligation to campaign for any particular political candidate or broadcast her political views, and the fact that her political views are not public enough for your taste does not give you the authority to presume what her political opinions may be or that her political views correlate to the support of white supremacy.”

And even if Ms. Swift has remained silent on the issue of white supremacy ... silence does not mean support.

Then Taylor went on a world tour and collected every dollar from those Trump-supporting, homophobic racists who love her music, fans I have dubbed “Beyoncé-billy.” But it wasn’t just a tour. It was a stadium tour.

And do you know when the tour ended?

Let me explain the essence of whiteness to you, Anthony A. et. al. Let me explain how privilege works. Let me show you how people, especially white women, get to stand on a pedestal made from a pile of dead Black bodies and still complain about bumping their head on the glass ceiling. And when you ask them about the river of blood, they will assure you that they had nothing to do with that.

Can’t you see how clean their feet are?

The last date on the U.S. leg of Taylor Swift’s world tour was Oct. 6, 2018, less than 24 hours before she shook up the world (with her 10/7 Instagram post declaring that she could not support Republican candidate Marsha Blackburn in the November 18 mid-term election).

And that, dear Kyle, is why the phrase “white women” is not a slur. “White women” is an apt description of those who benefit from the historical privilege white womanhood affords while still using the perceived purity of their femininity as a new millennium deflector shield.

Not *all* white women, Kyle; but enough. There are more Trump-supporting, racism-ignoring white women than there are Black murderers. A majority, Kyle. Or, as someone familiar with language, mathematics or history would call them: White women.

And if any of this confuses you ... @ me, next time.

Michael is also a critically acclaimed poet, journalist novelist and broadcaster. He is the editor-in-chief of Negus-WhoRead, and in 2013 he began hosting “The Black One” podcast and it has grown to become one of the most-listened to podcasts in Black America. For more information visit: <http://www.michaelharriot.com>.

The outside world told Black kids when I was growing up that we weren’t worth anything. But our parents said it wasn’t so, and our churches and our schoolteachers said it wasn’t so. They believed in us, and we, therefore, believed in ourselves. – Marian Wright Edelman

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

May I professionally help you to sell, buy, or lease a property?

GILLESREALTY.COM
GK Hansen Real Estate

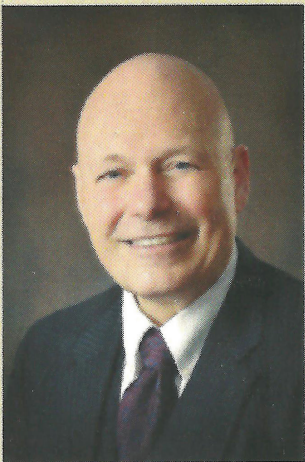
Robert A. Gilles
WA & ID



Direct 509-939-6420
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THE BAIL PROJECT

Bail Disruptor – Spokane, WA

The Bail Project is a new non-profit organization designed to combat mass incarceration by disrupting the money bail system – one person at a time. Over the next five years, The Bail Project will work with local partners to open dozens of sites in high-need jurisdictions and pay bail for tens of thousands of low-income people, reducing the human suffering caused by unaffordable cash bail and building on the work of grassroots groups and movements for decarceration and racial justice.

Our organization is comprised of a central support team and a network of Bail Disruptors who work in local jurisdictions to identify community members in pretrial detention, pay their bail, and provide support throughout the legal process. Our model leverages the fact that bail money is returned when people make their court appearances, allowing us to maintain a revolving bail fund and maximize our impact.

In addition to posting bail, The Bail Project seeks to partner with local advocacy groups, collect stories and data from our sites and work with universities to measure the socio-economic impacts of unaffordable cash bail with the goal of informing legislative reform. Through these efforts, The Bail Project will be the largest non-governmental decarceration of Americans in history—reducing human suffering, restoring the presumption of innocence, and adding to the growing momentum to end mass incarceration.

Position Summary:

Bail disruptors are community members across the country committed to racial and economic justice. They are the core of The Bail Project, securing people’s release, disrupting this draconian system, and fighting mass incarceration. We are expanding operations in Spokane, WA and we are looking for new bail disruptors to support our growing team on the ground!

Responsibilities:

Bail disruptors are tasked first and foremost with **posting bail** for those who cannot afford to purchase their freedom. Disruptors pay bail from local courts and jails, meet with TBP clients, remind them about upcoming court dates, and refer them to necessary services after release.

In addition to securing our clients’ freedom, the disruptors will uphold our holistic model by **working within the local community** and **collaborating with our central management** in the fight against this abusive system. This will entail collecting client and court data, giving clients an advocacy platform, and establishing local partnerships to expose the problems of the pretrial system that make TBP so necessary.

Qualifications:

You are driven, highly organized, and have a deep commitment to The Bail Project’s mission to eliminate race and wealth-based disparities in our criminal justice system. Applicants must be willing to work independently as well as in collaborative teams. Applicants will need to work non-traditional hours. A sense of humor, innovative spirit, and willingness to adapt to the change inherent to a rapidly scaling start-up are essential.

To excel in this role, you likely bring the following:

- Strong investment in the local community and in the fight for racial and economic justice
- Demonstrated interest and experience in racial and social justice or criminal defense
 - A self-motivated, flexible, and hard-working approach
 - Access to a reliable vehicle
 - Excellent organizational abilities
 - Strong decision-making and communication skills
- Basic ability in Excel and data entry, or willingness to learn
- Emotional intelligence, natural ability, and ability to handle multiple projects

HOW TO APPLY

Interested applicants should submit a RESUME and COVER LETTER by e-mail to careers@bailproject.org with **"Bail Disruptor- Spokane"** in the subject line. *No faxes or phone calls please.* Applicants will be notified regarding whether or not they have been selected for an interview.

APPLICATIONS WITHOUT COVER LETTERS WILL NOT BE PROCESSED.

For information about the Bail Project visit: <https://bailproject.org>.

Career Opportunities

S P O K A N E

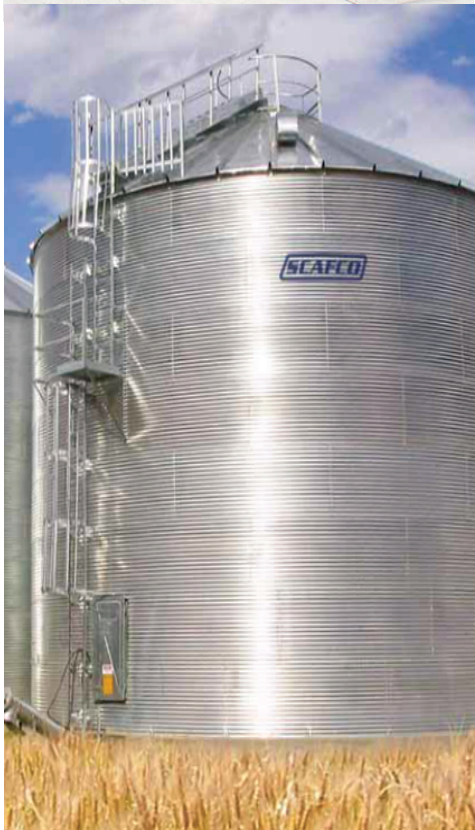
Long established manufacturing company is seeking energetic and hard-working individuals for management, sales, office, machine operators and laborer positions. To view all of our current openings, please visit our website www.SCAFCO.com and/or CWallA, our authorized distributor of SCAFCO products www.CWallA.com to fill out an application.

You can also send your resume to SCAFCO at 2800 E Main Ave Spokane, WA 99202.

Benefits Package Includes:

Medical, Dental, Vision Insurance, Vacation, Excellent 401(K) and Profit Sharing.





DECEMBER EVENTS

DECEMBER 12

FUSE BOOK CLUB

Bring a book from a minority writer to share and discuss.

6:00pm -8:00pm

Downtown Spokane Public Library Board Room, top level

906 W. Main Street, Spokane

Questions email Erin at EJToungate@gmail.com

DECEMBER 12-14

HOLIDAY MINI-REVIVAL

The Spokane Minister's Fellowship and the Ministers Widows and Wives Fellowship will be hosting a joint mini-revival for Christmas

6:30pm (each evening)

Morning Star Baptist Church

3909 W Rowan, Spokane, 99205

DECEMBER 15

A GOSPEL CHRISTMAS

With Yolanda Jones and Friends

Presented by Bethely Entertainment Group. Admission is free.

5:30pm

The Gathering House

733 W. Garland, Spokane 99205

DECEMBER 17

NAACP MEETING

Join the NAACP for our monthly general membership meeting.

7:00pm

Community Building

35 W. Main Street, Spokane WA

For more information contact the NAACP at 509-209-2425.

DECEMBER 18

POWER 2 THE POETRY

OPEN MIC

Christmas Edition

Share your poetry, music, songs, anecdotes, fictional story's, whatever you want. Just keep it to 3 minutes and consider the appropriateness of the content.

6 - 7:30pm

Downtown Spokane Public Library

(3rd Floor)

906 W Main Ave, Spokane, 99201

Free and open to the public.

DECEMBER 26

KWANZAA UNITY

CELEBRATION

Join us for African Music, dancing and more to celebrate Kwanzaa. The holiday honors culture, family and community.

7:0pm

West Central Community Center

1603 N. Belt, Spokane, WA 99208

Hosted by Roberta and James Wilburn, sponsored by Wilburn & Associates, LLC.

DECEMBER 31

SPOKANE MINISTER'S

FELLOWSHIP - NEW

YEAR'S WATCH SERVICE

Speaker: Pastor Lonnie Mitchell, Bethel AME Church

10pm

New Hope Baptist Church

9021 E Boone Ave

Spokane Valley, 99212

WINTERFEST 2019

December 19 - January 1

A Celebration of Christmas

A display of Cultural Christmas Trees decorated by the community

Riverpark Square Shopping Center 2nd Floor

808 W Main Ave. Spokane, 99201

December 21

Meet & Greet with local cultural organizations.

Learn about holiday traditions. Interactive cultural displays, arts & crafts, plus kids will receive free toys or books from Value Village (while supplies last). The first 250 attendees dressed in their favorite Christmas Character or Ugly Christmas Sweater will receive a swag bag from our sponsors.

Riverpark Square Shopping Center 2nd Floor

808 W Main Ave. Spokane, 99201

December 29

A Celebration of New Years

Highlighting New Year traditions through storytelling, music, dance, theatre, show & tell, cultural displays, arts & crafts and food.

1 pm - 4 pm

Downtown Spokane Library

906 W Main Ave, Spokane, WA 99201

Sponsored by The Family Guide. For information contact Charity@thefamilyguide.org or 509.928.9664

ANNOUNCEMENTS

wedding Announcement



Forrest Gilles and Jessica Fowler married the evening of November 10, 2018 at Barrister Winery in Spokane, Washington.

Both are graduates of Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane District 81 and graduates of Evergreen College in Olympia.

All parents, siblings, and many friends joined in the celebration.

After a brief honeymoon to Leavenworth, Forrest and Jessica Gilles are returning to their careers and home in Olympia.

Content sponsored by Robert A. Gilles, GillesRealty.com

Send information about upcoming community events to sandy@blacklensnews.com.

Bethely Entertainment Group presents



A Gospel Christmas
with
Yolanda Jones and friends
December 15th, 2018
The Gathering House Cafe
733 W. Garland Ave | Spokane, WA 99205
5:30 pm | FREE ADMISSION

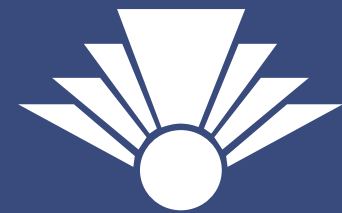
You are Invited!

A Kwanzaa Unity Celebration



December 26th, 7:00 pm
West Central Community Center
1603 N. Belt
Spokane, WA 99208
Kwanzaa
A Celebration of Culture, Family & Community
Join us for African Music, Dancing & More
Hosted by Roberta & James Wilburn
Sponsored by Wilburn & Associates, LLC

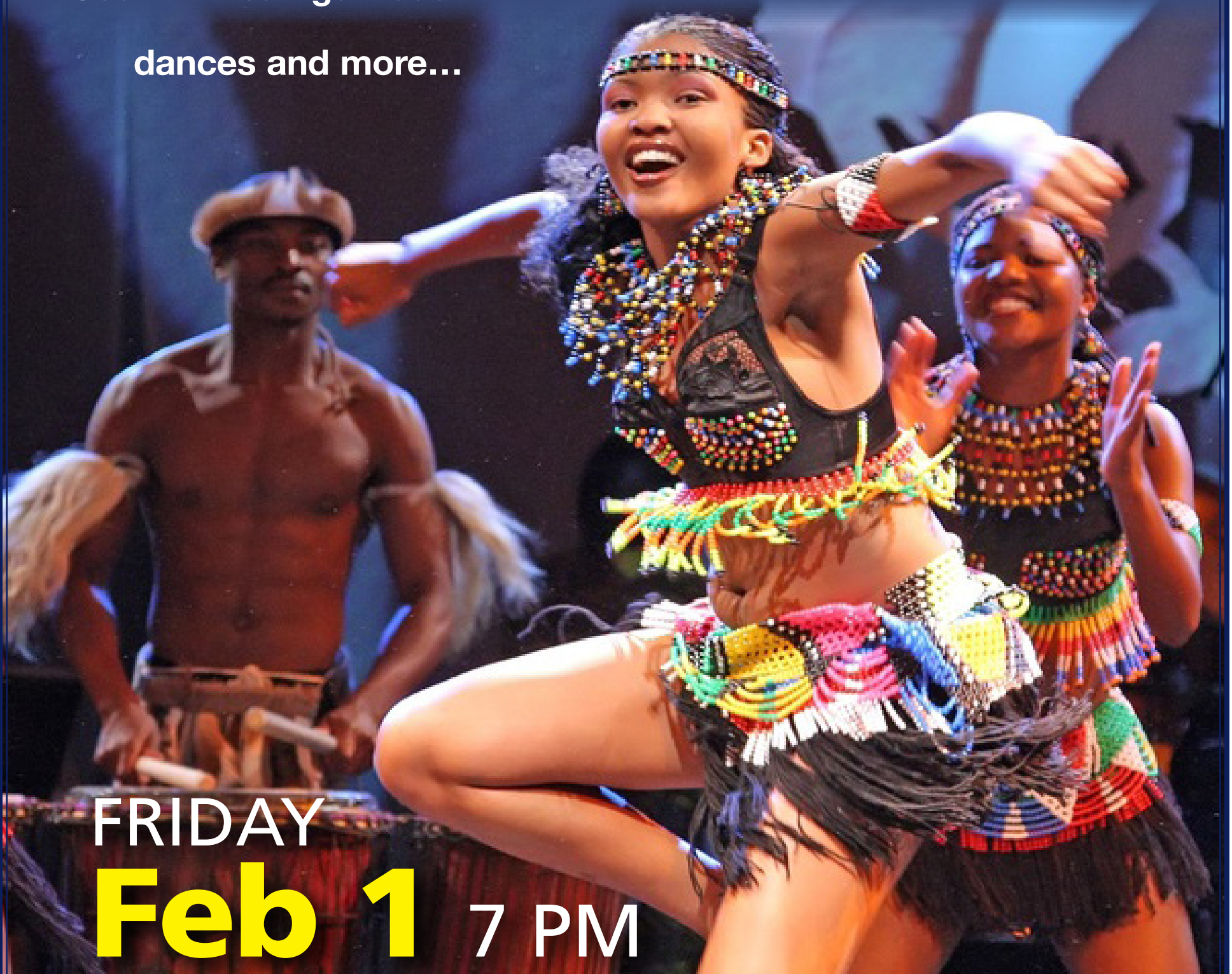
CIRQUE ZUMA



FOX PRESENTS

ZUMA

The mystique of Africa
meets the circus with
aerial acts, contortionist
feats, Egyptian limbo,
South African gumboot
dances and more...



FRIDAY

Feb 1 7 PM

MARTIN WOLDSON THEATER AT THE FOX
CALL 509 624 1200 OR FOXTHEATERSPOKANE.ORG