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Black excellence on full display at 2024 BEYA STEM Conference

Artificial intelligence and HBCU funding key topics of discussion

The BEYA STEM Conference returned to Baltimore on Feb. 15 for the first time in over a decade. The event highlighted Black students, professionals and members of the military that have made strides in the armed forces and STEM fields. Shown here, Tyrone Taborn (top left), chairman and founder Clear Communication Group, which hosted the conference, Morgan State University (MSU) student Alyson Jones and MSU President David Wilson, Ed.D. The conference pulled together leaders in the STEM and military fields, as well as dignitaries and elected officials like Maryland Gov. Wes Moore (bottom, left) and Vice Admiral Anthony Wins.

By Megan Sayles
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Several experts in artificial intelligence (AI) gathered at the 2024 Becoming Everything You Are (BEYA) STEM Conference on Feb. 16 to discuss the power and potential of the emerging technology. The seminar addressed the importance of AI adoption, its impact on the workforce and barriers to implementing technology. Fear, triggered by

misconceptions and a lack of education, was named as one of the most significant challenges to individuals embracing AI.

“The first problem is education. There’s a lack of information around what these technologies can and can’t do,” said Marcus Finley, CEO and digital director of FIN Digital. “The first thing people think of is ‘Terminator,’ the end of the world or that their

data is insecure if they use AI tools or technologies.”

Without proper education about AI, individuals—especially those who are underserved—may refuse or be unable to use the technology. This could delay tech equity, preventing people from having equal opportunities to utilize and benefit from emerging technologies.

“Tech equity is a major issue across our nation

when it comes to minorities leveraging technology and being aware of technology,” said Howard R. Jean, CEO and co-founder of Black Meta Agency. “Creating partnerships with BEYA and corporations [is important] to addressing equity.”

Tonia Bledsoe, a certified AI consultant and strategist, recommended that people test AI tools,

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Biden Administration announces \$1.2 billion in student debt forgiveness for 153,000 borrowers

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire

In a significant move to alleviate the burden of student debt, the Biden administration revealed on Feb 21, its decision to automatically forgive \$1.2 billion in student loans for 153,000 borrowers. Those eligible for debt relief are individuals enrolled in the saving on a valuable Education (SAVE) repayment plan who have diligently made payments for at least 10 years.

The Department of Education said it would

email those who will receive the debt cancellation today, another step in the administration’s ongoing efforts to address the nation’s staggering \$1.77 trillion student debt crisis. The announcement comes after the Supreme Court invalidated the administration’s previous plan for widespread student loan forgiveness, which aimed to assist over 40 million borrowers in wiping away up to \$20,000 in debt.

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona emphasized the administration’s commitment



The Biden-Harris Administration announces student loan forgiveness for one group of Americans.

to providing relief, stating, “If you’ve been paying for a decade, you’ve done your part, and you deserve relief.”

This latest move brings total approved loan relief to nearly 3.9 million borrowers, with a cumulative debt cancellation of almost \$138 billion through various executive actions. The 153,000 qualifying borrowers represent the first group to benefit from the SAVE plan policy, which allows debt forgiveness after ten years of repayment for those who borrowed \$12,000 or less in student loans.

Originally scheduled

Continued on A3

AFRO Archives on display at Banneker-Douglass Museum in Annapolis

By Bacarri Byrd
Special to the AFRO

The AFRO Archives are officially on display in the Banneker Douglass Museum as of Feb. 24 with the opening of the exhibit, “REVISIT/REIMAGINE: The Civil Rights Era in Maryland and Parallels of Today.”

The multidisciplinary exhibition is a tribute to the enduring legacy of the civil rights era and its profound influence on Maryland’s social landscape. The exhibition

showcases 43 rarely seen photographs from the archives of the AFRO American Newspapers, allowing visitors to see history in a new light. The exhibit includes captivating works from Maryland artists, highlighting the ongoing impact of the civil rights movement on art and culture.

This exhibition coincides with Governor Wes Moore’s declaration of 2024 as “The Year of Civil Rights in Maryland,” leading up to the momentous anniversary of the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on July 2.



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AFRO

WHAT’S TRENDING ON AFRO.COM

Nigeria’s currency has fallen to a record low as inflation surges—how did things get so bad?

By Chinedu Asadu
The Associated Press

Nigerians are facing one of the West African nation’s worst economic crises in years triggered by surging inflation, the result of monetary policies that have pushed the currency to an all-time low against the dollar. The situation has provoked anger and protests across the country.

The latest government statistics released Feb. 15 showed the inflation rate in January rose to 29.9 percent, its highest since 1996, mainly driven by food and non-alcoholic beverages. Nigeria’s currency, the naira, further plummeted to 1,524 to \$1 on Feb. 16, reflecting a 230 percent loss of value in the last year.

“My family is now living one day at a time (and) trusting God,” said trader Idris Ahmed, whose sales at a clothing store in Nigeria’s capital of Abuja have declined from an average of \$46 daily to \$16.

The plummeting currency worsens an already bad situation, further eroding incomes and savings. It squeezes millions of Nigerians already struggling with hardship due to government reforms including the removal of gas subsidies that resulted in gas prices tripling.

A snapshot of Nigeria’s economy

With a population of more than 210 million people, Nigeria is not just Africa’s most populous country but also the continent’s largest

economy. Its gross domestic product is driven mainly by services such as information technology and banking, followed by manufacturing and processing businesses and then agriculture.

The challenge is that the economy is far from sufficient for Nigeria’s booming population, relying heavily on imports to meet the daily needs of its citizens from cars to cutlery. So it is easily affected by external shocks such as the parallel foreign exchange market that determines the price of goods and services.

Nigeria’s economy is heavily dependent on crude oil, its largest foreign exchange earner. When crude prices plunged in 2014, authorities used its scarce foreign reserves to try to stabilize the naira amid multiple exchange rates. The government also shut down the land borders to encourage local production and limited access to the dollar for importers of certain items.

The measures, however, further destabilized the naira by facilitating a booming parallel market for the dollar. Crude oil sales that boost foreign exchange earnings have also dropped because of chronic theft and pipeline vandalism.

Monetary reforms poorly implemented

Shortly after taking the reins of power in May last year, President Bola Tinubu took bold steps to fix the ailing economy and attract investors. He

announced the end of costly decadeslong gas subsidies, which the government said were no longer sustainable. Meanwhile, the country’s multiple exchange rates were unified to allow market forces to determine the rate of the local naira against the dollar, which in effect devalued the currency.

Analysts say there were no adequate measures to contain the shocks that were bound to come as a result of reforms including the provision of a subsidized transportation system and an immediate increase in wages.

So the more than 200 percent increase in gas prices caused by the end of the gas subsidy started to have a knock-on effect on everything else, especially because locals rely heavily on gas-powered generators to light their households and run their businesses.

Why is the naira plummeting in value?

Under the previous leadership of the Central Bank of Nigeria, policymakers tightly controlled the rate of the naira against the dollar, thereby forcing individuals and businesses in need of dollars to head to the black market, where the currency was trading at a much lower rate.

There was also a huge backlog of accumulated foreign exchange demand



AP Photo/Mansur Ibrahim

Pedestrians shop for tomatoes and other food items at the Mile 12 Market in Lagos, Nigeria, Feb. 16. Nigerians are facing one of the West African nation’s worst economic crises. Monetary policies have led to a surge in inflation, causing the local currency to dip to an all-time low against the dollar, provoking anger and protests across the country.

on the official market — estimated to be \$7 billion — due in part to limited dollar flows as foreign investments into Nigeria and the country’s sale of crude oil have declined.

Authorities said a unified exchange rate would mean easier access to the dollar, thereby encouraging foreign investors and stabilizing the naira. But that has yet to happen because inflows have been poor. Instead, the naira has further weakened as it continues to depreciate against the dollar.

What are authorities doing?

CBN Gov. Olayemi Cardoso has said the bank has cleared \$2.5 billion of the foreign exchange backlog out of the \$7 billion that had been outstanding. The bank, however, found that \$2.4 billion of that backlog were false claims that it would not clear, Cardoso said, leaving a balance of about \$2.2 billion, which he said will be cleared “soon.”

Tinubu, meanwhile, has directed the release of food items such as cereals from government reserves among other palliatives to help cushion the effect of the hardship. The government has also said it plans to set up a commodity board to help regulate the soaring prices of goods and services.

This article was originally published by The Associated Press.

See more on afro.com

Black unemployment hit record low in 2023, Black wealth up 60 percent

By Megan Sayles
AFRO Business Writer
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In 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the world, Black unemployment peaked at 16.8 percent in the U.S. Now, White House officials have reported that 2023 was the lowest year for Black joblessness on record. It currently sits at 5.3 percent.

Officials say the recovery was jump started by President Biden signing the American Rescue Plan into law, which provided stimulus checks to Americans, deployed capital to hard-hit small businesses, extended unemployment benefits and expanded tax credits.

“Because of the actions of this administration and the grit and determination of the American people, we’re experiencing the most equitable recovery in American history,” said U.S. Department of Treasury Deputy Secretary



AP Photo/Meg Kinnard

Stephen Benjamin serves as the director of the White House Office of Public Engagement. He touts the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to investing in Black communities as one reason for the increase in employment in the African-American community.



Johanna Geron, Pool Photo via AP, File

Wally Adeyemo is the deputy secretary for the U.S. Department of Treasury. Adeyemo attributed Black Americans’ record-low unemployment rate to President Biden’s American Rescue Plan and Investing in America agenda.

Wally Adeyemo. “As we’ve succeeded in driving a historical equitable economic recovery, we’ve also been increasing our long term economic activity through the president’s Investing in America agenda.”

Biden’s agenda comprises the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. Each policy was created to drive public and private investment in manufacturing, repairing roads and bridges, delivering high-speed internet and creating clean transportation.

The policies also aim to generate good-paying jobs, including union jobs.

“Under President Joe Biden, 2.6 million more Black Americans have jobs. The latest jobs report also shows the share of Black Americans in the workforce is above its pre-pandemic level and near its highest level in over a decade,” said Adeyemo. “We’ve also seen Black Americans earnings rise faster than inflation. Earnings for the typical Black full-time worker are up 7.1 percent since before the pandemic.”

Black wealth has also increased by 60 percent since 2019, the largest growth on record. However, the country’s stark racial wealth gap still persists. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, median Black wealth was \$24,520 in 2021 compared to \$250,400 for Whites.

“The gap between Black and White wealth in America is still too great. That’s why the president’s been focused on doing things like making sure we’re providing access to small businesses, especially underrepresented small businesses, with the tools they need to build out the economies and communities they live in,” said Adeyemo. “[This includes] \$1.4 billion being provided to Black-owned and Black-operated banks in America that will not only make those banks more stable, but will allow them to be in a position where they can lend to businesses in their communities, which traditionally tend to be run by people of color.”

While in office, the Biden-Harris Administration has continued to increase federal spending on contracts to small businesses. In Fiscal Year 2022,

the administration hit an all-time-high by delivering \$163 billion in procurement dollars to small businesses, \$70 billion of which was awarded to small disadvantaged businesses.

The U.S. Small Business Administration has also eclipsed \$1 billion in lending to Black, small businesses for the third year in a row.

“The president and vice president came into office on day one, committed to revitalizing our economy from the middle out and the bottom up, combating

“Because of the actions of this administration and the grit and determination of the American people, we’re experiencing the most equitable recovery in American history.”

previous systems that have left communities behind by decades of failed trickle down economics,” said White House Public Engagement Director Stephen Benjamin. “The unemployment numbers we’ve seen today are truly historic, but it’s also important to note the economy is getting fundamentally stronger for African Americans because this administration is making long overdue investments in Black communities.”

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Commentary

BEYA Conference highlights Black excellence in STEM fields and military

By Catherine Pugh
Special to the *AFRO*

For three days I observed the glorious precision of the Black Engineer of the Year Awards (BEYA) Conference that occurred in Baltimore Feb. 15 - Feb. 17. People from across the globe filled downtown hotels, many not checking out until the last few waning hours of the weekend. It was “Black excellence at its peak.”

BEYA (Becoming Everything You Are) left Baltimore 12 years ago. This year denotes its 38th year of existence, as it returned with the theme “People Process, Technology.” BEYA is a multicultural event and has been contracted to be in Baltimore through 2027, which will represent its 40th year.

Tyrone Taborn, president of Career Communications, is at the center of this effort. He created BEYA and then went on to pursue and convince top engineering and technology companies and all branches of the Armed Forces that his brand of diversity hiring and inclusion at their organizations would be to their advantage. More importantly, his company has provided a singular platform to meet talented individuals for internships and employment with the BEYA STEM conference.

Taborn declared he would

improve opportunities for Black STEM professionals and salute members of the military, along with the pioneers of the leading Black STEM companies and organizations.

Taborn would be the first to admit that this conference planning and staging was hard work that could not have happened without the teams he assembled, including his wife Jean Hamilton and son Ty Taborn, who serve as officers in the company. A host of supporters and corporations also helped underwrite the cost of putting on such a first-class event. He thanked them all in the three publications distributed during the conference and featured them on the Career Communications website. They are also highlighted in STEM City USA, the metaverse his company created. Artificial Intelligence (AI) was showcased throughout the conference and a topic of many of the leaders who addressed conference attendees.

Attendance at BEYA exceeded all expectations. Early estimates put the numbers at more than 12,000 people crowding hotels, restaurants and entertainment venues. The economic impact on Baltimore City is yet to be determined.

Thousands of young people seeking to expand their careers in STEM fields flocked to the Baltimore Convention Center, where over 100 exhibitors staked out their locations for interviews.



AFRO Photo / Alexis Taylor

Former Baltimore City mayor and Maryland state senator Catherine Pugh speaks on her experience at the BEYA STEM Conference. The event took place Feb. 15 - 17 and explored topics such as African Americans in technology and research.

Young people arrived by the busloads, from colleges within driving distance, while others came by airplanes, trains and public buses.

If for any reason you have lost hope for the future of our young people you need only to have

attended BEYA. You would have observed, as I did, youth as young as 16, dressed uniformly in suits— young men and women looking professional and projecting the image of tomorrow’s leaders; your faith in them and our country would have been restored.

Among the many stories shared was a conversation I had with Peter Brooks, vice president of General Dynamics Talent Acquisition, IT. He told me he hired a young man he’d interviewed at BEYA. During the interview, the young man revealed he had taken a two-day bus ride to Baltimore to attend the BEYA conference. “I hired him,” he said, “because I knew anyone who would travel for two days on a Greyhound bus for an opportunity, would be a great employee.”

Brooks’ colleague Kori Montague, a graduate of Morgan State University School of Engineering, is now senior program manager of strategic programs for his organization. She spent a great deal of her time at the conference recruiting and building new relationships. While at the conference, she told Dr. Von Nebbitt, who is heading a new research institute at Morgan State University in the School of Social Work, that she looks “forward to building a relationship...to help Morgan in its research area.”

The opening reception for the

conference was left with standing room only, offering a prelude to the packed events that would follow each night.

The Stars and Stripes Dinner, in its 19th year, saluted a number of leaders in the armed forces. Gov. West Moore addressed his fellow members of the military with gratitude and U.S. Rep. Kweisi Mfume (D-Md.-07) was also in attendance. The renowned Morgan State University Choir performed as Morgan president, David Wilson, Ed.D. looked on with pride.

The formal culminating event, the Engineer of the Year Awards celebrated visionary achievements in engineering excellence for a number of industry STEM leaders. The top award, Engineer of the Year, was given to Ken Washington, a pioneer and innovator in STEM. Washington serves as vice president and chief of technology and innovation officer of Medtronic.

The event ended with a vocal salute from Washington’s wife, Angela Tribbling. The couple met when she was emcee of the event years ago at BEYA. In his acceptance speech, Washington committed to “merging science and technology with the medical field.”

If you missed it this year, mark your calendars as a reminder— you won’t want to miss the BEYA STEM conference in 2025— same place— Feb. 13-15.

BEYA

Continued from A3

like ChatGPT and Perplexity, before making judgements about the technology. She said AI could be especially beneficial in the education sector.

“AI is here. Students will use these tools,

“I think you should be less worried about AI taking your job and more worried about the person who knows AI taking your job.”

but we now have to figure out how we can get back into the classroom and show them how to use it correctly and how to research with it,” said Bledsoe, owner of Bledsoe Legacy

Management. “Then, because teachers are not doing so many administrative tasks, they can talk to their students and engage with them in a more educational way.”

As AI emerges, many have raised concerns about its potential to replace jobs across industries, as the technology has the ability to automate tasks and reduce labor costs. But, experts on the panel said AI can be designed to augment workers’ capabilities and increase productivity rather than put them out of a job.

“I think you should be less worried about AI taking your job and more worried about the person who knows AI taking your job,” Finely shared. “If you don’t understand the technology, the people you’re competing with who do understand it will get the job you’re looking for because they’re working faster and getting more things done. They can be more useful to a company than someone who doesn’t understand these technologies.”

Bledsoe acknowledged that some jobs will be lost to AI, but overall the technology will

create more jobs than those lost in the future. That being said, workers must have experience and knowledge in AI to be prepared for these roles.

“If you’re not using AI within the next two years, your businesses and the things

you’re doing are going to be far behind,” said Bledsoe. “You will feel like people are leapfrogging over you if you’re not employing this technology.”

Megan Sayles is a Report For America



AFRO Photo/Megan Sayles

Ernest Levert (left), retired Lockheed Martin fellow; Howard R. Jean, CEO and co-founder of Black Meta Agency; Tonia Bledsoe, owner of Bledsoe Legacy Management; Richard Wright, director of enterprise engineering and leadership excellence at Lockheed Martin; and Marcus Finley, CEO and digital director of FIN Digital hold a panel discussion about artificial intelligence’s role in shaping the world’s future.

Forgiveness

Continued from A1

for July, the Biden-Harris Administration implemented this provision of the SAVE plan nearly six months ahead of schedule, which the White House said amplified its commitment to delivering swift relief to those who have faithfully repaid their loans.

Under the SAVE plan, borrowers enrolled in the program who have been in repayment for at least a decade and took out \$12,000 or less in loans will receive immediate debt relief. The Department of Education identified and notified the nearly 153,000 borrowers enrolled in the SAVE plan who qualify for debt cancellation. Additional outreach will be conducted to encourage eligible borrowers not currently enrolled in SAVE to join the program.

The accelerated timeline for forgiveness is expected to particularly benefit community colleges and other borrowers with smaller loans, propelling them toward freedom from student debt faster than ever before.

According to the Biden-Harris Administration, 85 percent of future community college borrowers under the SAVE plan will be debt-free within a decade.

Biden introduced the SAVE plan last year, which offers the most affordable repayment option ever by basing monthly payments on income and family size rather than loan balance. Additionally, the plan ensures that borrowers making monthly payments do not accumulate interest and starting in July, undergraduate

loan payments will be halved.

The White House Council of Economic Advisers released an issue brief today, highlighting the potential savings for low- and middle-income borrowers enrolled in SAVE due to interest and principal forgiveness. The Biden-Harris Administration’s track record of canceling student debt now includes nearly 3.9 million Americans receiving almost \$138 billion in debt relief through various actions.

“The President remains dedicated to delivering debt relief to as many borrowers as possible, continuing to fight for comprehensive solutions to address student loan debt challenges,” officials stated in a Fact Sheet. “The administration has also taken historic steps to improve the student loan program, including significant increases in Pell Grants and reforms to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.” Borrowers interested in enrolling in SAVE can visit studentaid.gov/save for more information.

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REVISIT
REIMAGINE

The Civil Rights Era
in Maryland
and Parallels
of Today

FEBRUARY 24, 2024 – JANUARY 4, 2025
BANNEKER-DOUGLASS MUSEUM

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Courtesy photo

The Banneker Douglass Museum in Annapolis, Md. has 43 rare photos from the AFRO Archives on display in a new exhibit, titled “REVISIT/REIMAGINE: The Civil Rights Era in Maryland and Parallels of Today”

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COMMENTARY

Addressing infant mortality in the United States

By Dr. Sheldon Fields

For the first time in over 20 years, the infant mortality rate has increased in the United States, rising to 3 percent in 2022, according to CDC data. This troubling trend is not impacting everyone equally. Black infants face up to double the risk of dying in comparison to Hispanic and White babies. This data has sent shockwaves through the medical community and underscores the harsh realities for Black mothers and babies. Fortunately, there are common sense solutions hiding in plain sight that could start saving more lives—a process that begins with infant nutrition.

Maternal health and infant mortality remain prominent topics on Capitol Hill and beyond. Last spring, Congress reintroduced the Mommibus Act that includes critical investments aimed at addressing racial maternal health disparities. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul has unveiled a comprehensive proposal to address this ‘crisis head-on.’ Another step in the right direction would be swift passage of Rep. Morgan McGarvey’s legislation increasing access to human milk, which is proven to save young lives. Black infants have the highest mortality rate in the United States. Many factors contribute to this chilling

statistic, ranging from socioeconomic factors to access to quality health care. But we can start to protect Black preemies by expanding Medicaid and commercial insurance reimbursements for human milk-derived human milk fortifiers. It may sound like a complicated topic—but here’s why it is critically important to turn the tide on Black infant mortality.

Not only are Black babies more than twice as likely to die compared to White babies, they are nearly four times more likely to die from complications from very low birth weight (VLBW). One of the most common causes for death among premature babies is called necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC), a disease of the bowel that can be fatal.

The risk of NEC can be significantly reduced when babies are fed exclusively human milk. But many NICUs are not able to offer this nutrition to fragile preemies. Instead, most NICUs offer supplements—called fortifiers—that are made of cow’s milk instead of human milk. This can be problematic because cow’s milk is a foreign protein that can be difficult for a preemie to digest, resulting in infections like NEC.

Despite medical research, this nutrition is not readily available because of insufficient Medicaid and commercial



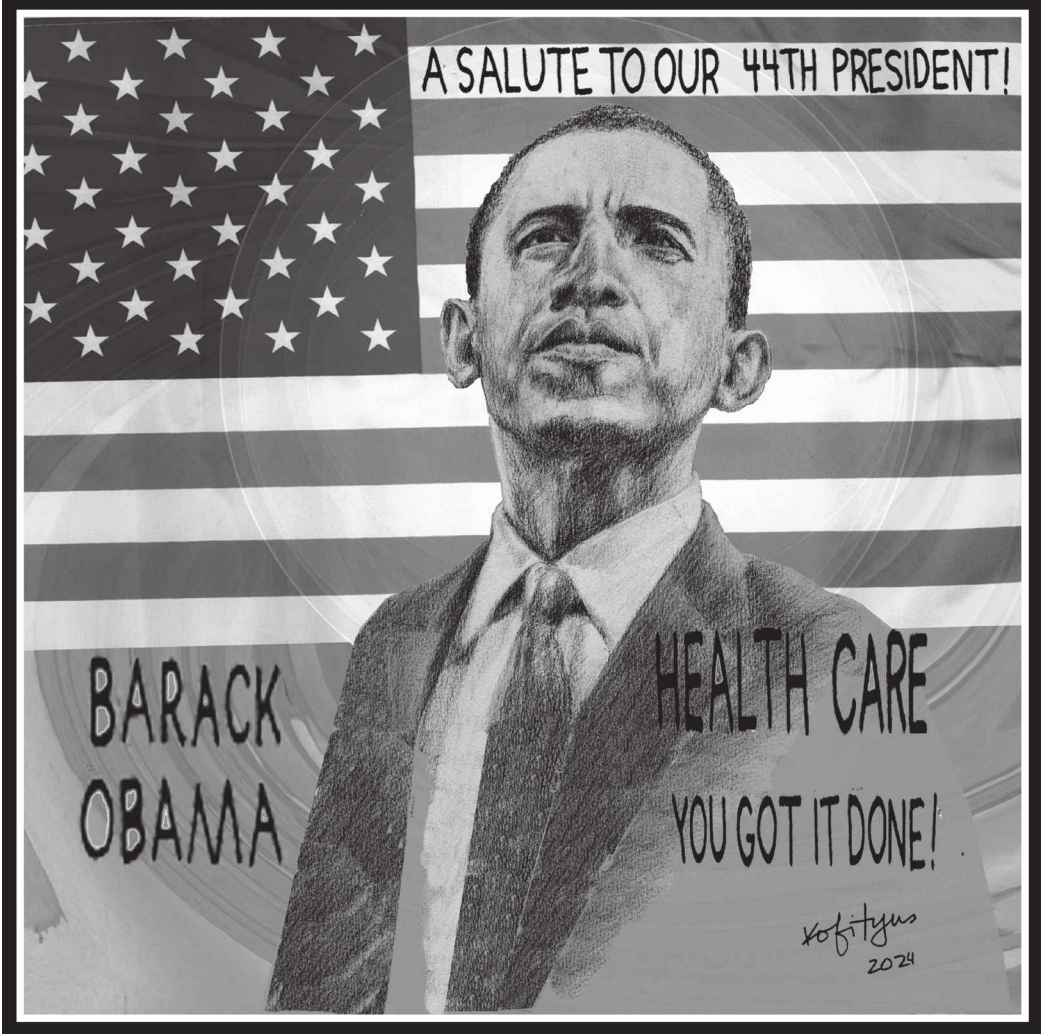
Photo courtesy of Penn State University

Dr. Sheldon Fields is president of the National Black Nurses Association.

insurance reimbursements. Rep. McGarvey’s bill would solve this problem by covering human milk-derived human milk fortifiers in all 50 states.

Clinical evidence shows that NICUs have stronger clinical outcomes when infants have access to an exclusive human milk diet. Fewer illnesses are reported, including NEC, and preemies have a better chance of staying healthy and growing strong enough to go home.

There is a growing body of evidence on the health benefits associated with breastmilk. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization have cited reduced respiratory, ear and gastrointestinal infections after six months of breastfeeding. Accordingly, Black premature



infants who are most susceptible to life-threatening illnesses should have access to human milk, regardless of a mother’s ability to provide it, to promote live-saving nutrition.

Our members are on the frontlines every day and witness first-hand the benefits of proper

nutrition for preemies and newborns. On behalf of our members, we urge Congress to pass Rep. McGarvey’s bill and remove barriers for Black babies.

The Black maternal health and infant mortality crisis can be summed up simply: The deaths

of our mothers and infants are largely preventable. While the solutions to save more lives are complicated, Congress can improve infant nutrition and strengthen the safety net for our most vulnerable and precious babies.

It’s time to be fearless in supporting disadvantaged entrepreneurs

By Imani Augustus and Madeline Burke

A federal appeals court in Miami is considering a challenge to a program by Fearless Fund, intended to provide grant, mentorship and training opportunities for Black women looking to grow their businesses. Other lawsuits have challenged entrepreneurial support implemented by the U.S. Small Business Administration and Minority Business Development Agency. These legal attacks all share a common accusation: helping Black women and other underserved business owners is racially discriminatory or exclusionary.

We don’t disagree that other entrepreneurs need help. The way to help them, though, is not by cutting down support for minority-owned businesses. Instead, we need a nationwide effort that helps all those who are disadvantaged to start and scale businesses.

Entrepreneurship has always been a key part of the American Dream. Business ownership creates jobs for people in their community and

provides the dignity of being able to work for oneself. Black entrepreneurs have 12 times more net worth than their peers who work for an employer. And new businesses and high-growth startups account for seven-in-ten new jobs annually.

And yet, starting a business in this country is exceptionally hard. According to new data from the Federal Reserve, small business revenue and employment growth are still below pre-COVID levels. A majority of small businesses are struggling with staffing, supply chain issues, and growing sales. And half have needed to use personal funds or cash reserves to handle recent financial challenges. No wonder 21 percent of businesses fail in their first year and only 50 percent are still in business after five years.

Barriers to starting and scaling businesses are even higher for women and people of color. It costs at least \$250,000 more for a Black or Brown entrepreneur to start the same, exact business as their White peer. As the Alliance for

Entrepreneurial Equity found, minority-owned businesses have less revenue, are more likely to be labeled a high credit risk, and are more likely to be shut out of financing. Because of these barriers, men own three times the number of small businesses than women. Only 2 percent of employer businesses are Black-owned and 6.5 percent are Hispanic-owned—far below their population in the United States.

But these entrepreneurs aren’t the only ones struggling. Four-in-ten rural business owners have trouble accessing capital, and over half struggle with access to digital technology. Access to venture capital is especially concentrated in four urban metropolitan areas—all on the coasts. Military spouses face unique burdens resulting from frequent moves and financial stress. People in low-income areas are more than twice as likely to live in a banking desert than their counterparts in higher-income neighborhoods.

Rather than attacking a venture capital fund or government program that’s trying to help disadvantaged

entrepreneurs, we need to embrace them. And we also need to build on those efforts through a large-scale nationwide commitment to help all disadvantaged entrepreneurs. To be successful, there needs to be a combination of public and private sector support. That’s where efforts like Fearless Fund come in. The private sector needs to commit to looking beyond established businesses to ensure we’re helping those who are often forgotten. The promises of billions of dollars committed to racial equity after the murder of George Floyd must be upheld. And private philanthropy can’t forget about entrepreneurship among other causes.

A nationwide effort can’t rely on the private sector alone, however—that’s where the government must step up. That starts with capital. Washington can do far more to increase available capital for entrepreneurs, modernize the financial system to ensure capital flows freely in the future, and support regional growth and capital deployment. The

federal government can also dramatically expand markets for US small businesses, from access to government contracts to international customers. And there’s a role for the government to play in lowering the barriers to entrepreneurship by making child care more plentiful and affordable, increasing technical assistance, streamlining antiquated licensing, and more.

If Black-owned businesses were proportionate to population, the United States



Photos courtesy of thirdway.org

Imani Augustus is the director of the Alliance for Entrepreneurial equity (AEE), a joint effort between Third Way and the National Urban League.

would see more Black-owned businesses, 7 million more jobs, and \$733 billion more in sales and revenue. If female-owned businesses had fewer barriers, we could see a real narrowing of the gender wealth gap. And if it was easier to grow a business in rural America, we could see a revitalization of communities throughout the country. To seize these opportunities, we must not strike down efforts to support disadvantaged entrepreneurs. We should support them—and do far more.



Madeline Burke is the communications and content advisor at AEE.

The importance of celebrating Black History Month

By Dr. John E. Warren

This year, perhaps more than ever, we need to be especially mindful of Black history.

This is a time of banning books from local libraries—especially those that tell of the history and struggle of Black Americans against slavery and racism; creating a threat to both our presence and our future. It has often been said that if you don’t know where you come from, you will have no idea of where you are going. Well, African Americans in particular must remember

that we are here today because of strong ancestors who did not allow the circumstances under which they lived, to snuff out their dreams of a future for themselves and their descendants.

We must remind ourselves that we are not to be defined by others; that we are not disadvantaged, or handicapped; that we are born with a right to equality and that we have always demanded equity even though others have tried to deny it to us. We are “We The People.” We must not allow the changes that have been removed from our bodies to be

placed on our minds. We have the ability to remove ourselves from poverty by using the tools in our hands. We must remember that we now possess everything that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of when in his 1957 speech he said “give us the ballot and we will place the right people in office to, in essence, further our cause. Today, so many of us have not because we will not use that which we do have. We have freedom of movement, of thought and how we use our minds. Yet, so many choose to squander these freedoms on how others tell us we should

think and dress and what we should be with the few dollars that so many of us waste on things that are not necessary. We have freedom of worship, yet so many of us don’t bother to pray until we find ourselves in crisis.

In addition to Black history, Dr. Carter G. Woodson left us a most valuable book, “The Miseducation of the Negro.” It’s time to honor his gift of Black history with our own personal contributions to the times in which we live and those we share this life experience with. Only when we engage in this level of

thought and activity, while making Black history a daily experience, can we truly honor what we have been given beyond the month of February each year.

Where do you stand and what are you doing with what you have been given? Let’s move beyond complaints and expectations by others to what each of us can do right where we stand. Let’s get back to defending ourselves and not allowing others to do it for us.

This article was originally published by the San Diego Voice and Viewpoint.



Courtesy photo

Dr. John E. Warren, publisher and CEO of the San Diego Voice and Viewpoint Newspaper, weighs in on Black History Month.

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Minding Your Brain Health: Your Best Defense Against Memory Loss, Alzheimer’s, & Dementia



Most of us know someone living with Alzheimer’s disease or another type of dementia. This may be particularly true for Maryland residents, as a recent study suggests two Maryland counties have among the highest estimated county-level prevalence of Alzheimer’s disease in the nation. This includes Baltimore City and Prince George’s County.

Prevalence studies also suggest that Black and Hispanic older adults are more likely to have Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of dementia compared with non-Hispanic Whites. While not completely understood, these racial/ethnic differences likely have multiple potential causes, including differences in the frequency of medical conditions that increase risk for cognitive decline (such as diabetes and high blood pressure) and social determinants of health, including life experiences

and health system barriers (such as access to care). To better understand these disparities and to find innovative treatments that benefit everyone, studies need to include more diverse participants.

While there is not much we can do about getting older or family histories—two of the biggest risk factors for developing dementia—we can make lifestyle choices that support brain health and help reduce risk for memory loss.

Among the most important things we can do to reduce the risk of developing dementia is to manage conditions that affect heart and blood vessels, including: controlling blood pressure; managing diabetes and high cholesterol; maintaining a healthy body weight; and quitting use of tobacco products. The AARP has summarized the “Six Pillars of Brain Health” to optimize cognitive aging and to allow people to **BE MORE:**

- **Be social:** stay connected with others and maintain meaningful relationships (either in-person or virtually)
- **Engage your brain:** pursue mentally stimulating hobbies and activities
- **Manage stress:** develop strategies to keep stress levels in check



Another way to be proactive about brain health and aging is to volunteer in research studies with the Johns Hopkins Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center (JHADRC). Individuals with or without memory problems may be eligible to participate. Many studies include access to experts, free memory testing, and compensation. Study volunteers are essential to helping find better treatments and interventions for memory loss, and brain health breakthroughs. Plus, volunteers can feel good about supporting future generations, and about being part of the search for improved treatments and cures. To learn more, please visit www.alzresearch.org/participate-in-research/ or call 443-542-7489.

For additional information:

- Visit the JHADRC’s website page about brain health: www.alzresearch.org/brainhealth;
- Watch the “Memory Matters” video series on YouTube (@johnshopkinsadrc7769) which includes short talks on topics related to memory loss and brain health: and
- Follow “Johns Hopkins Memory & Aging” on Facebook (jhmemoryandaging) & X/Twitter (@jh_memory_aging) for the latest updates on all these topics.

AI in schools: Revolution or risk for Black students?

By Joseph Williams
Word In Black

Hailed as cutting-edge technology that will revolutionize teaching, next-generation artificial intelligence is coming to a classroom near you — if it hasn’t already arrived. Advocates say computer programs and algorithms can help educators with everything from lesson plans to absenteeism, and can even spot students who are using AI to cheat.

But the approaching AI wave in middle- and high-school education could swamp Black students.

Experts say the increasing adoption of AI tools threatens to worsen long-standing race and equity issues — including racial bias in lessons and grading, the over-disciplining of Black boys, the continued under-resourcing of majority-minority schools and the “digital divide” between Black students and their White peers.

Yet as increasingly advanced machine-learning technology becomes more widespread, analysts say, school administrators and elected officials are behind the curve in crafting policies and standards for AI in the classroom that would ensure equity and protect Black students.

“We already know about the bias issues with AI,” says Victor Lee, an associate professor at the Stanford University Graduate School of Education. The risk for technologically-induced bias, Lee says, “is quite high for schools to jump in too quickly.”

But surveys have indicated one in four educators plan to increase the use of AI in their classrooms — a data point, he says, that indicates the technology is “rapidly advancing on a scale we are not prepared for.”

To be clear, schools and teachers have managed to adopt or work with advancing technology for generations —



Unsplash/Kenny Eliason

One in four educators plan to increase the use of AI in the classroom, but experts warn it could worsen long-standing race and equity issues.

from pocket calculators in the 1970s to take-home laptops in recent decades. Even artificial intelligence has established itself in classrooms, including smartphone apps that can scan and calculate a student’s math equation and Google smartboards that recognize shapes and colors.

Generative AI, however, is considered a game-changer for teachers and students.

Education experts, including Virginia Union Education Dean Matthew Lynch, point to multiple ways artificial intelligence is already relieving teachers of essential but burdensome tasks: grading papers, crafting lesson plans, and

taking attendance. In other classrooms, AI programs analyze homework and tests to help teachers identify struggling students — and

then put together a tailored plan to tutor them. And some school administrators are using facial recognition technology to identify and discipline students.

However, research has shown that racial bias is often baked into artificial intelligence programs, lessons and tutoring systems because they reflect the biases and blind spots of their designers — and the tech industry is predominantly White. Although Black Americans comprise approximately 13

percent of all workers, they make up only 7.4 percent of digital workers, according to a 2023 report by McKinsey and Co.

“Oftentimes tech companies didn’t really seem to understand the experience of Black and Brown students in the classroom,” Nidhi Hebbur, who co-founded the EdTech Equity Project, told The Hechinger Report in 2023. The EdTech Equity Project helps schools choose equitable ed tech products and hold companies accountable for tools that aren’t inclusive.

When tech companies build products for schools, they join forces with affluent, mostly-White schools or rely

on their own educational experience, she said. Their designers, she says, usually don’t consider or struggle to imagine the needs or experiences of under-resourced schools and Black students.

That means AI classroom modules that short-change Black history, or don’t take into consideration cultural differences in tutoring

lessons or tests, experts say. Over-reliance on software programs in schools, they say, could misidentify struggling students, fail to process cultural references in an essay, or point to problems that don’t exist.

Lee says using AI for test proctoring, for example, relies in part on facial recognition software that’s often balky, particularly when examining Black and brown faces. Issuing AI-based homework and lessons, he says, assumes that all students have equal access to computers and wifi at home to complete the work. And cash-strapped districts may be tempted to use AI as a quick fix for teacher shortages.

Widely adopting AI technology “is already embedding a lot of assumptions” about the software, its efficacy and for whom it is created, Lee says. “Bias exists in any creation,” like notebooks or scissors that are tough for left-handed people to use.

Before schools and teachers go all-in on AI technology, he says, tough questions must be asked: “Are we thinking critically about this? Is the student prepared for the world?”

“We want to be thoughtful about how to be inclusive,” he says.

This article was originally published by Word In Black.

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WASHINGTON-AREA

The Supreme Court leaves admissions plan at elite Virginia public high school in place

By The Associated Press

The Supreme Court on Feb. 20 left in place the admissions policy at an elite public high school in Virginia that some parents claimed discriminates against highly qualified Asian Americans.

The court’s order, over the dissent of Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas, ended a legal challenge to a policy that was overhauled in 2020 to increase diversity, without taking race into account.

A panel of the federal appeals court in Richmond had earlier upheld the constitutionality of the admissions policy at the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, a school frequently cited among the best in the nation.

The high court’s consideration of the case followed its decision in June that struck down admissions policies at colleges and universities that took account of the race of applicants.

The Fairfax County School Board overhauled the Thomas Jefferson admissions process in 2020, scrapping a standardized test. The new policy gives weight in favor of applicants who are economically disadvantaged or still learning English, but it does not take race into account.

The effect in the first freshman class admitted under it was to increase the percentage of Black students from 1 percent to 7 percent and Hispanic students from 3 percent to 11 percent. Both groups have been greatly underrepresented for decades. Asian American representation decreased from 73 percent to 54 percent.

For the current school year, Black and Hispanic students made up 6.7 percent and 6 percent, respectively, of those offered admission, the school board said. Asian Americans represented 61.6 percent of those admitted, the board said.

“We have long believed that the new admissions process is both constitutional and in the best interest of all of our students. It guarantees that all qualified students from all neighborhoods in Fairfax

Continued on B2

Cathy Hughes speaks at the 43rd Black History Month Breakfast Celebration



Photo courtesy of Howard University

Cathy Hughes serves as the CEO and founder of UrbanOne, a Black media company that supports African-American artists and entrepreneurs.

By Gene Lambey
Special to the *AFRO*

Maryland Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-Md.-District 5) invited Cathy Hughes, the founder and owner of the largest African-American owned and operated broadcasting company, UrbanOne, to speak at the 43rd annual Black History Month Breakfast Celebration on Feb 17.

“Every year the Black History Month Breakfast theme follows the national Black History Month theme as established by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH),” Hoyer shared. “Dr. Carter G. Woodson, recognized as the Father of Black History Month, founded ASALH in 1915 to carry forth the work of Black History Month.”

This year’s breakfast celebration was held at Martin’s Crosswinds in Greenbelt, Md.

“It is with sincere humility and gratitude that I am joining the 43rd Annual Black History Month Celebration that Congressman Steny Hoyer has conducted for over four decades,” said Cathy Hughes.

This event was created to promote African-American artists now and in the future to continue doing their work.

“As a lifelong supporter of the arts, I strongly believe arts and humanities are a critical component of our democracy. American artists remind our country of who we are – and African-American artists play a key role in that in our history and our future,” said Hoyer. “One of my top priorities in Congress is securing robust public school funding and ensuring that Maryland schools can maintain and expand the arts for students in the Fifth District.”

Congressman Hayer opened the event, listing several African-American figures in the arts from poets such as Phyllis Wheatley to rap artists such as Common. He spoke on the support of African-American artists during the height of the Civil Rights Movement.

“The Black History Month Breakfast has a rich history with distinguished speakers including my friend and brother the late Congressman John Lewis, then-Sen. Barack Obama, Vice President Kamala Harris and Maryland Governor Wes Moore,” Hoyer told the *AFRO*. “For 43 years I’ve looked forward to the BHMB

breakfast as a highlight of my year – bringing together community leaders, public servants, and Prince Georgians to celebrate Black history. I was proud to partner with my friend Betty Richardson many years ago to establish the Black History Month Planning Committee which is made up of community leaders who spearhead this excellent event.”

After referencing these historical, past and current Black artists, he spoke about Hughes and her background. Hoyer expressed that Hughes helped “amplify the voices of so many artists” over the years.

“She is a woman with great appreciation for the arts and a tremendous work ethic,” said Congressman Hoyer.

Growing up in the projects in Omaha, Nebraska, Hughes learned to adapt and developed herself. While taking care of her son, she attended the University of Nebraska Omaha and Creighton University, and took Business Administration courses.

Her early career in journalism and radio and time at these universities prepared her to work as the general sales manager for Howard University’s radio station, WHUR, in Washington D.C. in 1971.

Hughes helped pioneer the “quiet storm” format, along with Howard University intern Melvin Lindsey in 1976. The “quiet storm” format named after Smokey Robinson’s song would tie into the late night WHUR show, opening with rhythm blues and smooth jazz, to include jazz fusion music. The format was adopted by stations across the nation quickly.

She bought her first radio station, WOL-AM in 1980 and continued buying radio stations. Adding to these radio stations, Hughes ventured into television, radio talk shows and music genres.

In 2004, her platform, Urban One, went public, becoming the largest African-American multimedia company. Hughes became the first successful African-American woman to own a public company.

“Today, Urban One oversees dozens of stations spanning many of the biggest media markets in America. Urban One has created a platform for black voices and artists that would have seemed unimaginable just a generation ago,” said Congressman Hoyer. “None of it would have been possible without Cathy Hughes and her extraordinary vision.”

“...arts and humanities are a critical component of our democracy. American artists remind our country of who we are – and African-American artists play a key role in that in our history and our future.”

Secure D.C. Omnibus crime bill raises tension with residents

By Chriseen Herard
Special to the *AFRO*
cherard@afro.com

In 2023, the District of Columbia saw 274 reported homicides—the most homicides recorded in 26 years—while being flooded by a wave of carjackings, armed robberies and other violent crimes.

This prompted Councilmember Brooke Pinto (D-Ward 2) to introduce the Secure D.C. Omnibus crime bill, a melting pot of 12 bills that was created by Mayor Muriel Bowser and other D.C. leaders in an attempt to fight back crime that has unleashed havoc and taken loved ones from residents throughout the District.

“Every day I hear from residents across all eight wards about the urgent need to address crime in our neighborhoods. My Secure D.C. Omnibus is our opportunity to turn the tide on the crime trends that have overwhelmed our communities,” Pinto released in a statement. “It is resoundingly clear—from residents across the District, businesses, visitors, and our federal and regional partners—that urgent and effective action is needed now.”

Nonetheless, while the D.C. Council meeting took place on Feb. 6, words of protest filled the room as residents, wearing black shirts with bold, white letters that read “Don’t Throw D.C. Under Crimnibus,” sat to listen in.

The omnibus bill was introduced to address prevention, coordination and accountability.

Prevention

To prevent and put an end to the cycles of violence, the bill would establish a grant program for commercial spaces to use funds to buy more safety-enhancing measures and a pilot program for transit stations to buy more technology and cameras. A hospitality career training program, along with a higher nutrition standard, would be offered in D.C. jails.

Another way to avert violence derived from Mayor Bowser’s Addressing Crime Trends Now Act (A.C.T Now), mirrors a 1990 policy created during the crack epidemic that allowed for officers to invoke

Continued on B2

Renovations to 11th Street Bridge area to include park and education center

By Aria Brent
AFRO Staff Writer
abrent@afro.com

For decades, the divide created between the two communities on either side of the Anacostia River has served as a physical representation of differences in race, socio-economic status and even life expectancy.

Now, D.C. officials are working in collaboration with the nation’s largest multinational telecommunications and media conglomerate, Comcast, to bridge that gap in both a literal and figurative sense.

A local non-profit group, Building Bridges Across the River, has been working with the city of D.C for nearly a decade to figure out how they can repurpose the old 11th Street vehicular bridge. After much dialogue, the two organizations are now teaming up to renovate the space into a park, complete with an education center, a performance space, a cafe and communal areas.

The team will provide free public wifi throughout the park, and the education center will feature digital training skill classes and 15 laptops for community use. The project will break ground in August 2024 and is scheduled for completion in late 2026.

For more than ten years, countless meetings have been held in the Ward 8 community to discuss the renovations, design concepts and the repurposing of the bridge.

“Once we heard enthusiasm for the idea we said, ‘Alright, well

what should be [in] the park? What kind of programming should be in this new civic space that serves the community?’ We heard great ideas,” said Scott Kratz, senior vice president of Building Bridges. “They had ideas about an environmental education center, a performance space that can amplify the voices, culture and arts of local residents, access to the river through kayak and canoe launches, safe places to play in an intergenerational play space and a cafe.”

Focused on keeping the community first while creating the concept for this multi-million dollar project, the city and Building Bridges also launched an international design contest in 2014. The community was involved in multiple ways by competing in the contest and participating in the selection process that helped choose the project’s design team.

Kratz noted that members of the community are excited to see their ideas come to fruition as the project’s construction is getting scheduled. He also explained how much effort is being put forth to assure that gentrification and displacement don’t interfere with the park being enjoyed and utilized by those who helped shape it.

“We started a larger effort to do what we’ve done from the beginning, which is go back to the community and look to see where there might be some actions that we can take in affordable housing investments, supporting Black entrepreneurs, small businesses east of the river, workforce training and the arts and culture investments,” Kratz stated. “We want to make sure that the same residents who’ve been through some tough times east of the river can be here for the

good times.”

A series of programs that have been set up through Building Bridges Equitable Development Plan that has allowed Ward 8 residents to receive resources for housing and career training since 2015.

The organization has invested several million dollars into Black owned businesses in the area via pro bono technical assistance and grants to assure that they can balance the revenue the park will be

Continued on B2



The Supreme Court

Continued from B1

County have a fair shot at attending this exceptional high school,” said Karl Frisch, Fairfax County School Board chair.

In 2022, a federal judge found the school board engaged in impermissible “racial balancing” when it overhauled admissions. The appeals court reversed that ruling.

Alito wrote that the district court got it right. The appeals court essentially ruled that “intentional racial discrimination is constitutional so long as it is not too severe,” he wrote.

The parents who challenged the policy say it discriminates against Asian American applicants who would have been granted admission if academic merit were the sole criteria, and that efforts to

“We have long believed that the new admissions process is both constitutional and in the best interest of all of our students. It guarantees that all qualified students from all neighborhoods in Fairfax County have a fair shot at attending this exceptional high school.”

increase Black and Hispanic representation necessarily come at the expense of Asian Americans.

“The Supreme Court missed an important opportunity to end race-based discrimination in K-12 admissions,” said Pacific

Legal Foundation senior attorney Joshua Thompson, who represents the parents who challenged.

This article was originally published by the Associated Press.



AP Photo / Mariam Zuhaib

The Supreme Court on Feb. 20 left in place the admissions policy at an elite public high school in Virginia, despite claims that it discriminates against highly qualified Asian Americans.

Secure D.C.

Continued from B1

‘drug-free zones.’ In other words, police could declare an area, known to be a hotspot for illicit drug activity, as an illegal zone to gather “for the purpose of participating in the use, purchase, or sale of illegal drugs.”

The fear of this, however, is that these zones may enable authorities to act unconstitutionally, ignore the help of those addicted to drugs and disproportionately affect Black and Brown neighborhoods in comparison to their white counterparts.

“We deserve to be safe from crime and from abuse of power,” The American City Liberty Union (ACLU) of D.C.’s policy counsel Melissa Wasser said in a statement. “Allowing officers to escape accountability and to harass people in designated zones will not make D.C. safer. Locking more people up before they are found guilty will not make D.C. safer. These types of provisions in the Secure D.C. Act are not ‘public safety’ solutions, they are measures that open the door for abuse of power.”

“Failed and ineffective ‘drug-free’ zones do little to prevent crime,” Wasser stated. “Instead, they open the door for police officers to harass people and violate our rights.”

Coordination

Under coordination, the bill requires more transparency from the D.C. government, including the Office of Unified Communications releasing data

“Every day I hear from residents across all eight wards about the urgent need to address crime in our neighborhoods. My Secure D.C. Omnibus is our opportunity to turn the tide on the crime trends that have overwhelmed our communities.”

on the 911 call center and the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council sharing the results of diversion programs.

The bill then provides more leeway to D.C. police. Officers could view body-cam footage during pending cases, except if the officers themselves are accused of using excessive force or murdering someone without probable cause. They can also choose whether to withhold disclosing to an individual that they’re being recorded by a body-worn camera.

Additionally, it grants



Photo courtesy of Mayor Bowser

Mayor Muriel Bowser stands with the city’s Black officials after passing the Secure D.C. Omnibus to reduce crime after a 26 percent increase in 2023.

police permission to use neck restraints to limit movement and to pursue suspects in a vehicular chase in the event that they pose a threat to public safety.

Accountability

Accountability under the crime bill alters the definitions and penalties for certain violent crimes, carjackings and theft. It creates a new felony offense for “endangerment with a firearm and unlawful discarding of firearms and ammunition,” and lowers the price threshold for retail theft, making it a felony to take \$500 worth of merchandise as opposed to \$1,000.

The definition of carjacking would be expanded so more cases could be prosecuted. An individual being forcibly removed from their vehicle would no longer be the only circumstance to fall under carjacking. If car keys are taken forcibly or by threat, this could be considered a carjacking violation as well.

Strangulation would be considered a felony and penalties would be raised for hate crimes and crimes committed within the vicinity of a recreational center. The bill would also allow for pretrial detention for both juveniles and adults who are accused of committing violent crimes.

“Secure D.C. leans

heavily on punishment, but that alone won’t be enough,” Councilmember Janeese Lewis George (D- Ward 4), wrote on ‘X.’ “Ending cycles of violence also requires rehabilitation.”

“There are few things as dangerous as giving the public a false sense of safety and this bill pretends to move us forward while we are actually standing still,” Patrice Sulton, executive director of D.C. Justice Lab, told the *AFRO*. “As the guns get bigger and the opportunities get smaller, violence will continue to grow. We have to start focusing on serving people’s unmet needs, investing copious amounts of resources into violence prevention and building a

more coordinated effort across communities.”

Amendments

Although the Secure D.C. bill passed the D.C. Council’s first round of voting, it did not do so without the alterations and removals of some proposals that received disapproval from many D.C. residents.

One of these alterations was made in an anti-mask provision. Councilmembers removed the language that stated it would be illegal to wear a face covering that “causes another person to fear for his or her personal safety.”

See more on afro.com

Renovations

Continued from B1

bringing in. Through their Equitable Development Program, a total of \$92 million dollars has been invested into the betterment and development of the East Anacostia community.

The work being done by Building Bridges has already benefited the Ward 8 community. The impact that will come with the bridge’s reuse is expected to be life changing for some residents. Providing access to free public wifi both in and around the park, free laptops and public programming that’s

focused on increasing digital literacy are only a few of the ways that Comcast plans to be part of the solution that’s going to close the divide amongst the Bridge Park community.

“We know for a fact that in Wards 5, 7 and 8, there is a lower rate of subscription—that being those who subscribe to home internet service. There’s a lower digital literacy [rate] and that’s from a lack of understanding how to use the internet to benefit them for jobs, and homework,” explained Misty Allen, vice

president of government affairs and community impact for Comcast’s Beltway Region.

Allen noted that approximately 28 percent of D.C. residents don’t have internet access at home. The low digital literacy rates, specifically in the Bridge Park community, are a reflection of some of its members being older and unfamiliar with internet use. She explained that living in the age of technology has brought a set of challenges to the community’s elders that is leaving them under-resourced.

“Part of the community is also overcoming fear and reluctance. If you think of our senior citizens, they’re being faced with a need to embrace technology like they never had before,” Allen stated. “A lot of our banking has become digital and even doctor’s are now doing pre-screens digitally before they take in-person meetings. We have to help all of our citizens and residents adopt the internet and really be connected to our digital world.”

For over a decade, Comcast has been working with organizations like Building Bridges to solve the



Photo courtesy of OMA+OLIN

Comcast is working with D.C. officials and the nonprofit Building Bridges Across the River to redevelop the 11th Street Bridge. The renovations will include an education center to improve digital equity and space for residents and guests to enjoy the natural beauty of the Anacostia River.

digital divide that exists in so many communities. The telecommunications giant is backed by a \$1 billion dollar commitment called Project Up which focuses on the unlimited possibilities that can occur when people have access to digital resources.

Kratz shared with the *AFRO*

that the project is preparing for the city’s transportation department to solicit their general contractor in May of this year.

Although it will be nearly another two years until the bridge is done, the project is highly anticipated and people are already envisioning everything it will bring to the community.

Kratz is hoping the space will serve as an area for residents and guests to reconnect.

“This will be a place where you can reconnect with nature,” he said. “You can reconnect with the river, and you can reconnect with each other.”



Photo courtesy of OMA+OLIN

Comcast presents a digital mock up of the bridge, which is expected to be complete in 2026.

Supreme Court to decide if cities can punish homelessness

By Lisa Woelf
Capital News Service

More homeless people than ever sleep on the streets.

The U.S. Supreme Court will decide if local governments can punish homeless people who sleep or camp outside when no shelter beds are available, or if such laws violate the Eighth Amendment's protection against cruel and unusual punishment.

The issue came to the court from the small Oregon city of Grants Pass, which has more homeless people than shelter beds. City ordinances prohibit those people from sleeping on the street or in parks if they use a blanket or cardboard box as protection from the weather. Three homeless people filed a complaint against the city, and a district court ruled that the city can't enforce that law.

The Supreme Court is expected to hear oral arguments in late April.

Elected officials including California Gov. Gavin Newsom urged the Supreme Court to take the case and side with Grants Pass.

In a statement, Newsom said that "the courts have tied the hands of state and local governments that seek to use common sense approaches to clean our streets and provide help for unhoused Californians living in inhumane conditions."

In an amicus brief to the Supreme Court, Newsom argued that local governments "need the flexibility to... address immediate threats to health and safety in public places – both to individuals living in unsafe encampments and other members of the

public impacted by them." Ed Johnson, lead counsel for the homeless respondents in the Supreme Court case, said in a written statement: "This case is not about a city's ability to regulate or prohibit encampments. That has always been permissible." Instead, the issue is whether cities can punish homeless residents "for simply existing without access to shelter," he said.

The Supreme Court decided to take on the case amid what Jesse Rabinowitz at the advocacy organization National Homelessness Law Center (NHLC) calls a "nationwide movement... to criminalize people experiencing homelessness."

In an analysis of 187 city laws from 2006 to 2019, NHLC found a vast

"It's sad that cities are throwing up their hands and saying the only way we can end homelessness is by arresting people."

increase in laws targeting visible homelessness, such as panhandling and sleeping in public.

"It's sad that cities are throwing up their hands and saying the only way we can end homelessness is by arresting people," Rabinowitz said.



Capital News Service / Lisa Woelf

The Supreme Court will soon decide if cities can punish homeless people that sleep outside.

In recent years, the NHLC recorded an increase in state-level efforts to criminalize homelessness. As of Jan. 24, 11 states had seen bills criminalizing homelessness introduced or passed, according to the organization.

While criminalization efforts increase, the number of homeless people sleeping on the streets reached an all-time high in 2023. In a single night, 256,104 people were counted as unhoused across the United States, according to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The data is collected nationwide every year on a specific night and goes back to 2007, the year with the second-highest number of homeless people sleeping outside.

An analysis of the nationwide data shows that there was a nationwide downward trend in unsheltered homelessness until 2015, after which the number steadily increased for five years.

The 2020 count took place before the coronavirus pandemic swept the country. The effects of the virus and measures against its spread impacted the 2021 survey that shows a sharp drop in unsheltered homelessness, often attributed to federal moratoriums on evictions, among other causes.

Since then, the number of unsheltered homeless people has increased again, peaking in 2023.

In contrast to the national trend, Maryland has significantly reduced homelessness over the last 14 years, according to HUD data.

The numbers for 2021 and 2022 "were suppressed by the pandemic," Danielle Meister, assistant secretary for homeless solutions at the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, said in a statement.

Compared to 2020, 7.8 percent fewer people were homeless in 2023. The number of homeless people sleeping

outside plummeted by 23 percent.

According to Jake Day, Maryland's secretary of housing and community development, the state is "within striking distance" of ending homelessness for veterans, unaccompanied youth and domestic violence survivors.

To reach that goal, the department needs to focus on solutions that work: "reducing housing instability, lowering barriers to services, and investing in permanent

supportive housing," Day said in a statement.

Rabinowitz said that he hopes the Supreme Court will uphold the lower court's precedent and side with homeless people. "Criminalizing people experiencing homelessness keeps them homeless longer," he said. "When folks get the housing they need, they thrive."

This article was originally published by the Capital News Service

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Tell Us What Matters to You



We want your feedback on our Fiscal Year 2025 budget proposals.

Metro is facing an unprecedented \$750 million budget deficit and without additional funding, service cuts are a possibility and Metro must plan accordingly. Metro is considering the following fare and service changes starting July 1, 2024:



Metrobus service reductions and route eliminations



MetroAccess service reductions



Metrorail service reductions and station closures



Increased fares and parking rates



View the complete budget proposals at wmata.com/budget to learn more.

Provide feedback by 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 5, 2024.



Take the survey and provide comments
Visit wmata.com/budget or scan the code.



Participate in an In-Person Public Hearing
All public hearings begin at 6 p.m., with an open house starting at 5 p.m. At the open house, attendees can ask questions to Metro staff about the proposed changes.



Participate in a Virtual Public Hearing
To participate by phone, call 206-899-2028 and enter meeting code 164 729 013. To participate by video, email speak@wmata.com by 5 p.m. the day before the public hearing.



In-Person Public Hearings

Monday, February 26, 2024
Silver Spring Civic Building
1 Veterans Plaza
Silver Spring, MD

Tuesday, February 27, 2024
Metro Headquarters
300 7th Street SW
Washington, DC

Wednesday, February 28, 2024
Arlington County Board Room
2100 Clarendon Blvd. Ste. #307
Arlington, VA



Virtual Public Hearing

Thursday, February 29, 2024
12:00 p.m.



Watch or listen live to the public hearings at wmata.com/budget or at youtube.com/MetroForward



wmata.com/budget

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Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, gender, religion, disability, or family status. ASL interpretation will be provided. To request other accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or other language interpretation services (free of charge), contact the Office of the Board Secretary at 202-962-2511 (TTY: 202-962-2033) or send a message to speak@wmata.com as soon as possible, so Metro can make the necessary arrangements before the public hearing date.





New Balance hosts D.C. Sounds of an Icon gallery



Daniel Johnson (left) and Tyrik Nelson enjoy the panel discussion at the New Balance Sounds of an Icon gallery.

By Jamaica Kalika
Special to the AFRO

New Balance, the popular shoe brand, connected with the D.C. creative community to celebrate the iconic 990 sneaker and its impact on the D.C. fashion scene. Local creators and business owners came together on Feb. 17 to discuss the District’s influence on both the brand’s trajectory and the broader cultural landscape. The interactive project, held at the Chela Mitchell Gallery near Union Market, merged a gallery exhibition and panel discussion, allowing audience members the opportunity to mingle with the



New Balance displays their 990 sneakers in gray.



Kyle Hockaday (left) and Evan Ross reminisce on D.C.’s cultural evolution as “Chocolate City.”

panelists and network amongst themselves. They also contributed to a collective map, spotlighting the city’s diverse neighborhoods and their unique sneaker stories.



Kiyana Akins (left) and Simone Ruth converse with participants in the crowd after the panel discussion.



Bijan Binson poses in front of the D.C. New Balance wall gallery.



Albert Djoum shows off a unique outfit.



Brian Bailey enjoys the fashion scene with other creatives.



Kiyana Akins uses the collective map to landmark the areas that represent her style and fashion influences in the District.



Sara Adams (left), Francis Domkor and Brian Raupp



CIAA Tournament women’s player to watch: Aniylah Bryant

By Maliik Obee
Special to the AFRO

There isn’t a team hotter on the women’s side of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) conference than the Broncos of Fayetteville State University. Led by senior guard Aniylah Bryant, the 22-2 Broncos are on an eight-game win streak, in search of a CIAA title and demanding new respect for their historic program.

Bryant starred at Havelock High in North Carolina before committing to Louisburg College in 2019. The high-scoring 5-foot-7 guard averaged 17.4 points per game across two seasons for the Hurricanes, before transferring to Fayetteville State in 2021. In her first season with the team, Bryant averaged 13 points per game, three rebounds and two assists along with 70 steals. After putting up nearly identical numbers in 2022-2023, Bryant has elevated her game in her senior year.

“After putting up nearly identical numbers in 2022-2023, Bryant has elevated her game in her senior year.”

Through 24 contests, Bryant is averaging a career-high 16.1 points, ranking third in the CIAA. Making 40-of-163 three-point-attempts (24 percent), Bryant ranks fifth of all scorers in shots from beyond the arc. Averaging 31 minutes per contest, Bryant is shooting (and making) more shots than ever, converting on 137 of 344 attempts from the field. At just under 40 percent from the floor (39.8 percent), Bryant has been more efficient in her senior campaign. She’s also drawing fouls at a high rate, attempting a career-high 114 free throws, with 72 makes (63 percent). On Feb. 8, she recorded 1,000 points for her career in Fayetteville’s 64-56 win over Johnson C Smith. While scoring at a high clip, she is also sharing the ball more at just under three assists (2.8) per game.

But, it’s not just Bryant’s scoring that makes her a key factor in the team’s 22 wins and 15-1 conference record - but her tenacious defense. With 105 steals on the year (4.4 spg), she leads the conference and all of Division II women’s basketball. In the Feb. 17 game, with a 75-66 win over Livingstone, she recorded a whopping eight takeaways.



AP Photo/Rogelio V. Solis

Fayetteville’s Aniylah Bryant has a record of scoring in droves and is sure to be a leader on the 2024 Tournament court.

It marked the 11th game of five-plus steals for the pesky defender. Fayetteville State is allowing just 58 points per contest, the lowest average across the CIAA.

On Feb. 15, Bryant nailed a last-second free throw to seal a 48-47 victory over Winston Salem State on the road. When called upon, she has proven to be reliable in the clutch for a Fayetteville State team that has shown its ability to overcome adversity, as well as winning decisively.

The Lady Broncos have lost once since November’s 58-56 non-conference loss to Lander, falling 63-53 to the Lady Golden Bulls of Johnson C. Smith on Jan. 20. In that span, they’ve won seven contests by double-digits, with eight-straight wins overall. This week, Fayetteville State will take on the Claflin Panthers and Saint Augustine’s Falcons before heading to Baltimore for the tournament.

In January, Bryant was recognized by Boxtorow as the HBCU National Player of the Week, after averaging 20 points, 4 rebounds, 4 steals and 3 assists across two victories.

The upcoming CIAA tournament gives her a chance to end her decorated collegiate career as a champion.

In 2020, Fayetteville State captured the fourth CIAA title in school history, a year before Bryant’s arrival. Through the year, Fayetteville State has run through the competition, going 12-0 at home and 9-2 on the road. Now, she leads a team on a storybook run, who has a chance to earn their fifth title and an automatic bid for the NCAA Division II playoffs. Keep an eye on the high-scoring senior with the sweet touch from outside looking to go out with a bang.

All-Conference CIAA Watch Team:

Aniylah Bryant - Guard, Fayetteville State
Alanis Hill - Guard, Elizabeth City State
Lauren Scott - Guard, Claflin
Amesha Miller- Forward, Virginia State
Zaniyyah Ross-Barnes, Forward, Shaw

CIAA Tournament Men’s player to watch: Jaylen Alston

By Maliik Obee
Special to the AFRO

On Feb. 26, the 2024 Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) Tournament will kick off for the fourth time in Baltimore, since moving to Charm City in 2022. The conference’s dozen teams participating in the men’s and women’s brackets will look to take home the crown, in the 79th rendition of the historic Black college tournament. After leading the Winston Salem State Rams to a 2023 CIAA title, guard Jaylen Alston is a name to know for next week’s tournament.

Alston left his mark in Baltimore in 2023, earning All-CIAA Tournament honors and the MVP award for his efforts in the Rams’ 62-57 championship victory over the Lincoln Lions. On Feb. 16, Alston recorded a double-double (14 points, 11 rebounds) to help the Rams defeat the Virginia Union Panthers in the NBA’s All Star Weekend HBCU Classic. With the tournament just days away, the versatile 6-foot-4 guard looks to join a distinguished group of Rams all-time to win three CIAA titles.

The Gibsonville, N.C. native shined at Eastern Guilford High, committing to Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs in 2018. After appearing in nine games as a freshman, Alston transferred to Winston Salem State in 2019. Alston made an immediate impact, averaging 12.5 points, six rebounds and shooting 50 percent from the field to help the Rams hoist the 2019-2020 CIAA title.

Alston stepped away from the game for personal reasons following the win, leading to a whirlwind of events, including COVID-19 that caused him to miss two seasons on the court. In 2022, Alston returned to the Rams, who climbed to 21-9 on the year and earned a Division II playoff appearance for their conference title win. Winston Salem State would fall 52-50 to the Crimson Hawks of Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

At 17-8, the Rams are riding a three-game win streak with two matchups against the Shaw Bears and Livingstone Blue Bears before the tournament gets underway. With his senior year nearing an end, Alston continues to take his game to new heights - in the moments that the Rams need him most.

Winston Salem State kicked off the month of February by honoring Alston for recording 1000-career points along with 500-career rebounds. In 25 appearances in 2024, Alston set new career-highs in points (17.5 ppg) and rebounds (8.2 rpg). The athletic slasher continues to score at will around the basket, while becoming more proficient. Alston is shooting a career-high 54 percent from the field, while hitting 74



AP Photo/Michael Conroy

Jaylen Alston (No. 4) shoots over Virginia Union forward Jonathan Salazar (No. 23) during the second half of the HBCU Classic.

percent of his free throw attempts. Alston has scored over 30 points in three contests this season, and six games of 20-plus - while being held under double-digits just twice. The combo guard can fill up the stat sheet in a hurry - but it’s his microwave scoring and clutch genes that make him a threat to help the Rams hoist the trophy.

At just 45 career three-point-attempts (22 percent), Alston isn’t much of a shooter from beyond the arc. But, the senior can put the ball in the basket in a variety of ways, seemingly at his discretion. From driving to the paint with his quick first step, to playing with his back to the basket, Alston shows no qualms about getting physical. For the third-straight season, Alston has grabbed 50-plus offensive rebounds, giving himself a shot at second-chance points. Of the Rams last 10 games, five have been decided by five points or less.

At a career-high of 32 minutes per contest, the Rams have relied upon Alston and his ability to score in bunches and in a pinch.

With next week’s tournament approaching, Alston has a unique opportunity to capture his third conference title and help the Rams remove the bitter taste of falling short in the Division II playoffs to conclude a historic collegiate career.

All-Conference CIAA Watch Team:

Jaylen Alston - Guard, Winston Salem State
Reggie Hudson - Guard, Lincoln
Tahj Harding - Forward, Virginia Union
Jordan Hinds - Forward, Bluefield State
Avery Huggins - Forward, Johnson C Smith

Health & Wellness

#Faithworks: Black church leaders seek innovative solutions to suicide in Black and Brown communities

By Mylika Scatliffe
AFRO Women's Health Writer

For centuries, church has been the pillar of the Black community with members and non members coming to the church and its leaders for solace, refuge, prayer and respite.

With increasing rates of suicide among people of color and historical taboos and stigma surrounding suicide among Black people in particular, we must think differently about access to mental health care.

“We recognize that suicides are trending upward in the Black and Brown communities, even while they have started to trend downward in other communities,” said Vic Armstrong, vice president for Health Equity and Engagement at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).

Soul Shop for Black Churches is a one-day training workshop designed to instruct members of the Black faith community on the impact of suicide as a health outcome, and to provide training on how to address suicide related issues. The AFSP is committed to health equity for underserved communities and addressing the increased rate of suicide among Black people. The creation of Soul Shop for Black Churches was driven by this commitment.

“We need to think differently about how we reach people in underserved communities for a number of different reasons. One is that we have to consider how we create access to services and think differently about what access means,” said Armstrong.

Access is about providing resources that are relatable to lived experiences, culturally relevant, and that you are willing to utilize.

“When we think about access to resources of the Black community, one of the most effective ways to reach Black people is to utilize the church. We know that faith based organizations traditionally have been the gateway to the Black community,” Armstrong continued.



Unsplash/Sincerely Media

African-American churches around the country are taking on the fight against suicide in Black and Brown communities.

Most Black people grew up hearing suicide was not a Black problem and that African-American people are resilient for having survived slavery. However, the Pew Research Center states that a little over 50 percent of any church congregation has been impacted by suicide in some way.

“There are people sitting in the church pews that have been impacted but have not been able to talk about it because we don’t create space in our faith based settings; so they carry the pain around with them,” said Armstrong.

According to the AFSP website, Soul Shop for Black Churches is aimed at leaders in the faith community, whether clergy or laypeople, that are on the front lines of the mental health crisis to minister to those impacted by all the faces and struggles with regard to suicide. The workshop leverages the prominent position of the church in the Black community for a positive impact on suicide prevention and focus on loss and healing for those whose lives have been affected by suicide in some way.

Talking to someone about suicide is difficult, especially in a culture where the subject is taboo. The eight hour training provides practical skills on how to help make talking about suicide easier.

“We do some role playing, to get them comfortable enough to learn how to have a conversation with someone experiencing

suicidal desperation,” said Armstrong. Armstrong makes it very clear to workshop attendees that they are not expected to be clinicians as a result of the training. “We want you to know what steps to take if someone comes to you, or you recognize warning signs that someone may be thinking about suicide or making a suicide plan that you feel able to talk to them and intervene,” added Armstrong. The ultimate goal for Soul Shop for Black Churches is when encountered with someone experiencing suicidal desperation in that moment to help move them from a point of desperation and connect them with resources for professional help. Attendees of the training are taught the acronym CALL:

- **C - commit** to talking someone if you are experiencing suicidal desperation or if you think someone else is considering ending their life.
- **A - ask.** Be willing to ask an individual if they are thinking about killing themselves. We provide language to help you have the ability to actually ask those questions.
- **L - listen.** Be willing to listen to what the person is sharing and not interject yourself. Listening provides you with opportunities to know what and how to connect that person with services.
- **L - lead.** To lead someone to safety so that they are in a position where they either no longer want to kill themselves or remove them from the risk of harm.

Armstrong emphasized that in that moment of helping someone it is not your job to cure them. “Your role is not to try and fix them, but to lead that individual to safe and good hands,” said Armstrong.

To Armstrong, one of the most important distinctions about Soul Shop for Black Churches is that while there is no lack of secular training, this is the only one he’s aware of designed specifically for Black faith leaders

“There is still some stigma attached to this because often faith leaders often struggle with the message that suicide is an unforgivable sin, and are not sure where to start with the conversation,” said Armstrong. “There’s still some stigma that’s probably not going away, but I think that little by little we can chip away at the negative connotation and faith leaders can see this as something they can fold into their ministry.”

Soul Shop for Black Churches is about thinking about suicide prevention in a new way: reaching people before they get to the point of wanting to die.

The goal is to learn to recognize the risks and warning signs before an individual reaches that point, and to be able to minister to family and community members impacted when someone dies by suicide.

For more information on Soul Shop for Black Churches can be found at socialmovement.org or afsp.org.

Commentary

Vitamin D, prostate cancer and racism

By Leeland A. M. Jones, MD
Special to the AFRO

The prostate gland is making big headlines. This month O.J. Simpson received a prostate cancer diagnosis, while Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin’s struggle with the disease led to a second hospitalization. King Charles III, in England, recently disclosed information about his enlarged prostate. And with the Jan. 22 death of Martin Luther King Jr.’s son, Dexter King, this small sexual organ has made big news recently.

As men, we don’t like to talk about this organ, but it is a primary cause of cancer in men– and especially in Black men in America. Much suffering and death can be avoided if this topic is dealt with properly.

These are such passionate and intense topics for me, I could scream. Being a doctor for 50 years, believe me, I’ve seen a lot of stuff. I can tell you, keeping secret certain topics that should be taught in high school only adds to the mystery– and mortality.

The importance of vitamin D

First, let’s answer the question: “How is vitamin D related to all these topics and how are they all connected to skin color?”

We need to understand that healthy vitamin D levels require sunshine– something hard to get enough of in the standard American diet (SAD Diet). Vitamin D

has many essential functions: it promotes healthy bones, teeth and muscles– it even acts as a hormone. When most people think of vitamin D deficiency, they think of thinning bones. But now we know there is much more to this essential nutrient.

Darker skin means more melanin, which has many health benefits, but also requires more sunshine. The skin of people of color was created for a sunnier climate than what is typically seen in parts of North America. The fact that we spend most of our time indoors, using sunscreens and experiencing long winters only adds to the deficiency. Worse yet, not telling a person how to avoid cancers–when you know– I believe is a form of racism. It reminds me of the Tuskegee Experiments, Henrietta Lacks and the usage of her HeLa cells, and the high mortality of pregnant Black mothers and their newborns.

Vitamin D, cancer and COVID-19

The prostate gland is a small gland the size of walnut that sits just below the bladder and connects the flow of urine from the bladder to the penis. Its normal function is to take sperm from the testis and add it to the ejaculate of sperm during orgasm. It can be infected, enlarged and become a source of cancer, which isn’t uncommon in older men. Men– we need to know how this works, what leads to good health, what causes disease and how to keep ourselves and our sons healthy.



Courtesy photo

Dr. Leeland A. M. Jones weighs in on the link between vitamin D and prostate cancer in the Black community.

Vitamin D deficiency in Black Americans is as high as 76 percent. Low levels of vitamin D in the blood can be the cause of disease or a factor in a host of serious medical and psychological conditions that could be easily prevented. One of these conditions is cancer of the prostate gland and even aggressive prostate cancer.

Vitamin D deficiency is related to frequent illness, slow wound healing, fatigue and bone thinning, dementia and even youth onset dementia and cancers of the stomach, colon, rectum and lung. Also related to a lack of vitamin D: Depression, the “Winter Blues,”

poor sleep and poor energy. For more information, I recommend checking out information from Dr. John Campbell on Youtube. He discusses at length the ties between vitamin D and prostate cancer, as well as vitamin D and COVID-19.

It is well known that low levels or deficiency of vitamin D lowers our ability to fight infections of all kinds. This is one reason you see many Black folks getting sicker and dying quicker with COVID-19. You should see the massive doses that are given to those suffering serious infection.

I also suggest checking out “The Colors of COVID” with Tyler Perry, Angela Bassett on YouTube.

Please! Know your vitamin D blood level!

Knowing how much vitamin D you have in your blood level is crucial! Ask your doctor or health care provider for a vitamin D blood test and if low, work with your provider to optimize your levels.

Know how much vitamin D you really need

Sufficient blood levels of 25(OH) D, the measure of vitamin D status, are 20-30 ng/ml. Roughly 41 percent of the American population is below 30 ng/ml. These are not goals, but the lowest levels to AVOID. Ideal levels may be 40-60 ng/ml, especially during tough times.

What is considered normal levels have changed and are now higher.

We need more than we thought. What was believed to be normal 20-30 years ago are not high enough to ward off all these illnesses and cancers. We will need 2,000-3,000 IU/day of vitamin D to achieve these minimum levels. But even higher amounts during the long winters, and higher risk factors: race, health and many other factors. Check with your doctor.

How can we get enough vitamin D?

Now for some really good news: vitamin D is very very cheap! Foods high in vitamin D include egg yolks, fish, cheese and beef liver. These foods probably won’t be enough to maintain high enough blood levels– especially in the winter–maybe not even in the Spring and Fall either.

Supplementation is cheap and science based.

Vitamin D3 is cheap online. A bottle of 5,000 IU can be bought for \$10 on Amazon. That’s enough for a family of three—for a year—if taken most days in the winter months.

Disclaimer: This content is for informational and educational purposes only. It is not intended to provide medical advice. But you are advised to consult your personal physician regarding specific health questions. The viewpoints expressed in this commentary are those of the author, not the AFRO American Newspapers.

From the AFRO Archives

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority: An AFRO Salute to the first Black Greek letter organization for women

By Ashleigh Fields
AFRO Assistant Editor
afields@afro.com

This year, the AFRO High Tea will honor all nine organizations of the Divine Nine. Taking place on April 20, the tea will pay homage to the men and women who have done the work to improve the communities around them and beyond. In preparation for the event, the Afro Charities team has combed through the AFRO Archives to see how these great organizations and their respective members have consistently shown up in the records of time, making change on a local, national and global scale.

The organizations will be honored in the order of their founding: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, founded Dec. 4, 1906; Alpha Kappa

Alpha Sorority, founded Jan. 15, 1908; Kappa Alpha Psi, founded Jan. 5, 1911; Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, founded Nov. 17, 1911; Delta Sigma Theta Sorority founded Jan. 13, 1913; Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, founded Jan. 9, 1914; Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, founded Jan. 16, 1920; Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, founded Nov. 12, 1922, and Iota Phi Theta, founded Sep. 19, 1963.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, the first intercollegiate sorority created to “serve all mankind,” was founded on Jan. 15, 1908 on the campus of Howard University.

Under the leadership of Ethel Hedgemon Lyle, the first Black Greek lettered sorority came together in Miner Hall at the historically Black institution with a total of nine founders. Together, Lucy Diggs Slowe, Norma Elizabeth Boyd, Marjorie Hill, Joanna Berry Shields, Harriet Josephne Terry, Margaret Flagg Holmes, Lavinia Norman, Anna Easter Brown, Sarah Meriweather Nutter, Lillie Burke, Ethel Jones Mowbray, Marie Woolfolk Taylor, Beulah Burke, Carrie Snowden, Alice Murray and Hedgemon created an organization that has stood the test of time and truly impacted communities around the globe.

Throughout the course of 116 years, historic activists such as Corretta Scott King, Toni Morrison and Dr. Mae Carol Jemison have come to be recognized as members of the sorority. Today Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority boasts more than 350,000 members, according to their official website. Women across the globe can be found in the organization’s ranks, including U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, who pledged the sorority at Howard University in 1986.

Jan. 1936

A.K.A.'s Vote \$1,750 to Extend Health Project in Mississippi

Sorority Encouraged by Report of Aid to 2,600 Destitute Children with \$1500 Fund in 1935; Student Loan Fund Is Established.

RICHMOND, Va.—Appropriation of \$1750 for extension of the health project launched in Lexington, Miss., last summer, and the establishment of a student loan fund for undergraduate members were outstanding among the business activities of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority during its eighteenth annual bourse here, December 27 to 30.

Perhaps the greatest enthusiasm of the session was occasioned by the exhaustive report on the Mississippi project, directed by Dr. Dorothy Boulding Ferebee, during which 2,667 children of tenant families in Holmes County, Miss., were immunized against diphtheria and smallpox, at a total cost of \$1558.84.

Conditions Described
The report includes a graphic account of the deplorable conditions under which these families live—in weather-beaten shacks, bound to the cotton plantations, absorbing all they can hope to be allowed for their entire year's crop; the curricula of their few one-room schools strictly censured and their health completely neglected.

Miss Ida L. Jackson of Oakland, Cal., who has been elected to her third year as supreme basileus of the sorority, is credited with the idea of the health work, which was conceived during the summer of 1934 when five members of the group contributed their services in a teaching project at Lexington.

Health Worst in Country
The area selected, in which there were approximately 24,000 colored persons, outnumbering whites twelve to one, is said by the U.S. Surgeon General's office to possess the worst health conditions of any region in the country.

At the 1934 bourse in New York, Dr. Ferebee, a Washington physician, was named to head a health committee to arrange the project. The committee also included:

Norma Boyd, Washington; Zenobia Gilpin, Richmond, Va.; Irene Malvan, Washington; Agnes Monnier, Philadelphia; Gladys Pinderhughes, Baltimore; Myra Smith, New York; Ethel Sutton, Washington; Ruth Weatherless Sample, Washington; Georgeette White, Washington; and Mary Williams, Tuskegee, Ala.



MISS IDA L. JACKSON

found, would not permit the tenants to leave the plantations, and it was necessary to secure the individual permission of the overlords to carry out the service, giving each assurance that no propaganda was intended.

Tuskegee Honored Nurse
One full-time public health nurse was loaned by Tuskegee Institute and two part-time nurses by the Holmes County Health Department, to assist the sorority women.

During the course of the venture—July 8 to August 16—a total of 5,000 doses at an average cost of 30 cents each, were administered to the 2,667 children treated, including 2,040 toxoid doses and 2,960 vaccine doses. In addition, 22 adults were treated.

The six cars in which the medical, linens and vacuum ice boxes for preserving the biologicals were transported, traveled a total combined mileage of 5,324 within the county.

Chapter Awards Made

Alpha Chi Chapter of Durham, N.C., received the achievement cup awarded annually to a chapter of the sorority. Both the other annual awards—the cup for the largest contribution to the foreign fellowship fund and one for the largest local scholarship—went to Xi Omega Chapter of Washington, D.C.



DR. DOROTHY B. FEREBEE

the institution of the practice, to the following persons:

Mrs. Ethel Harris Grubbs (1937) for study in mathematics in Berlin, Germany. Mrs. Grubbs is now teaching in the public schools of Washington, D.C.

Mrs. Hazel Boone Williams (1939) an alumna of Fisk University and of Kansas, where she received her A.B. and A.M. degrees and was elected to membership in Phi Beta Kappa, for advance study in English at Oxford University in England. Mrs. Williams is on the faculty of the Louisville Municipal College, Louisville, Ky.

Miss Merze Tate (1931), A.B. Western State Teachers' College, Indianapolis, Ind., A.M. Teachers' College of Columbia University, who received an advance degree in historical research after three years' study at Oxford.

Miss Zetella Turner (1931), graduate of the Kansas State Teachers' College and of the University of Kansas, where she received her A.M. degree and was elected to membership in Phi Beta Kappa, now studying the drama in England.

Speakers

Among the speakers during the sessions were:

Mrs. Charlotte Hawkins Brown, president of Palmer Memorial Institute, Sedalia, N.C., an honorary member of the sorority, who addressed the business meeting on Friday afternoon, December 27, on "What Am I to Do with My Life as a Colored Woman?"

Mrs. Saran Meriweather Nutter of Charleston, W.Va., principal speaker at the public meeting at Moore Street Baptist Church, Sunday evening, whose subject was "Trends of Women in the World Today."

Miss Juanita Jackson, of the national office of the N.A.A.C.P., who spoke Monday afternoon on "The Negro Woman's Problem."

Jan. 1955



AKA's PROVIDE SHOES FOR NEEDY GIRLS

Mrs. Ruby T. Bryant

Mrs. Berenice T. Young

Mrs. Lois Ridgeley

Mrs. Dorothy Graves

Feb. 1928

WITH \$1,000 CHECK DREAM COMES TRUE

D. C. 'Math' Teacher Awarded A. K. A. Fellowship To Study In Germany

BOARD CONCURS

School Officials To Grant Year's Leave Of Absence

WASHINGTON, D. C.—Pre-

sentation of the first national award of the \$1,000 foreign fellowship of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority to Miss Ethel Catherine Harris, head of the department of mathematics in the colored schools of the District of Columbia, was made at the founders' day celebration of the Xi Omega chapter.

The exercises had a reminiscent setting. They were held in the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel at Howard University twenty years ago that the sorority was organized. It was there that Miss Harris received her education.

Presentation was made by Mrs. B. Beatrice Scott, supreme basileus of the sorority.

Method
Mrs. Scott explained the method by which Miss Harris was chosen. Every local chapter of the sorority contributed to the fellowship fund. Each chapter was allowed the privilege of presenting the name of a candidate with credentials, detailing

her scholastic achievements, contributions to a specialized field and accretions in sorority affairs. Xi Omega chapter presented the name of Miss Harris. She was chosen. Mrs. Scott presented the \$1,000 check.

To Miss Harris it is the realization of her fondest dreams. For several years, she said, in accepting the award, she had dreamed of studying in Germany. This award of her sorority makes it possible.

Leave Of Absence
The Board of Education of the District of Columbia has indicated that it will grant Miss Harris a leave of absence for a year.

Before the presentation was made, Dr. Dorothy Boulding delivered an address on the ideals of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. The ideals of her sorority, she declared, are high scholastic standards among college women, improvements of the social status and high standards of womanhood.

The history of the sorority was given by Miss Susie Tate. Vocal solos were rendered by Miss Avis Andrews.

A piano solo was played by Miss Naomi Harmon. "The Ivy" was recited by Miss Eva Hilton. Mrs. Jennie Weller, basileus of Xi Omega chapter, presided.

Mrs. Ethel Catherine Harris graduated from Howard with a degree of bachelor of science in 1915. She received the degree of master of arts from Columbia in 1924. Columbia also awarded her a diploma as a supervisor of mathematics.

For two years, 1917 to 1919, Miss Harris taught at the Normal and In-

stitute at Fredericksburg, Va. From 1919 to 1923 she taught at the Peabody High School, Petersburg, Va. In 1923 she began teaching mathematics in the Armstrong Technical High School. In January, 1927, she was made the head of the department of mathematics in the colored schools.

The Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority was founded in an attic room in Miner Hall at Howard University in 1908.

Oct. 1937

1500 FAMILY GROUPS AIDED BY AKA SET-UP

WASHINGTON.

The AKA sorority health project, consisting of sixteen clinics, which employed ten members of the sorority and three additional workers in Bolivar County in the Delta region of Mississippi, reached about 1,500 families, it was reported this week.

The thirteen workers came from five States and the District of Columbia.

Variety of Topics

The work of the clinics included: Health talks to mothers, general medical examinations, dental examination and prophylaxis, immunization against diphtheria and small-pox, malaria therapy, blood testing of expectant mothers and anti-syphilitic treatment in indicated cases.

Approximately 7,000 booklets on infant and child care, diet and nutrition and various phases of health and hygiene were distributed.

The staff of volunteer health workers included:

Dr. Dorothy Boulding Ferebee, Washington, medical director; Mrs. Margaret Davis Bowen, New Orleans, La., supreme basileus; Dr. Mary C. Wright, dentist, Boston; Dr. Thelma Coffey, physician, New Orleans;

Miss Mary E. Williams, public health nurse, Tuskegee Institute, Ala.; Miss Mildred Wood, nurse, Washington; Herman A. Washington, social research, New Orleans; and the following clinical assistants:

Miss Irene Baxter, Philadelphia; Miss Melva Price, New York; Mrs. Portia W. Nickens, New Rochelle; Miss Marjorie Holloman, Washington; Mrs. Anna Mae Rhodes, New Orleans; and Miss Audrey Augustine, Brooklyn.

The mayor of Shelby in Bolivar County said that he was especially grateful to the sorority for its vision and enthusiasm for public health service.

He heartily agreed with Dr. Dedwylder, County Health Officer, who said it was the best conducted health service offered by any volunteer organization in the county, he stated.

Oscar Wolfe, owner of a large plantation whose tenants were benefited by one of the clinics, commented on the need for more and more health clinics in sections where services are limited.

Dr. Dorothy Ferebee, director of the project, sums up the work with the statement that this year's project, evolved from the experimental stages of its fore-runners, has become efficiently departmentalized, while the addition of new services has enhanced its technical value.

She further points out that one of the most important features of the 1937 project was its intensification of individual service in preference to numerical coverage.

Mar. 1943

Sorority Fights Labor Draft Bill

WASHINGTON

The Austin-Wadsworth bill to draft labor was denounced today by the Non-Partisan Council of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority here on the grounds that it would perpetuate "discriminatory economic patterns."

"Misuse of the bill's provisions for tests, training and qualifications, against which no safeguards have been provided, would result in wholesale discrimination on a scale yet to be seen, with members of racial or other minorities relegated to inferior jobs," the sorority's council said.

The council further admonished that should it be possible to produce a national selective service act for civilians which would not violate civil rights, every point in it must be bulwarked by specific non-discrimination clauses, if a new orgy of differentials based on race is to be avoided.



Payment Policy for legal notice advertisements.
Effective immediately, The Afro American Newspapers will require prepayment for publication of all legal notices. Payment will be accepted in the form of checks, credit card or money order. Any returned checks will be subject to a \$25.00 processing fee and may result in the suspension of any future advertising at our discretion.

LEGAL NOTICES

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2024ADM000060
DEBRA JANICE MOORE
Name of Decedent
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs**

RACHELLE MELBA MOORE, whose address is 2567 COLEBROOKE DR, TEMPLE HILLS,MD 20748, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of DEBRA JANICE MOORE, who died on JUNE 4, 2023 without a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 9, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Daily Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

RACHELLE MELBA MOORE
Personal Representative

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REGISTER OF WILLS
2/09, 2/16, 2/23/24

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2024ADM000082
EARL THOMAS EASTER JR
Name of Decedent
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs**

CHANTIL THOMAS, whose address is 2812 SHERMAN AVE NW, WASHINGTON DC 20001, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of EARL THOMAS EASTER JR, who died on DECEMBER 13, 2020 without a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 9, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Daily Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

CHANTIL THOMAS
Personal Representative

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REGISTER OF WILLS
2/09, 2/16, 2/23/24

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2024ADM49
GEORGE A. LEWIS
Name of Decedent
FRAZER WALTON, JR.
1913 D STREET, N.E.
WASHINGTON, DC 20002
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs**

GWENDOLYN HUNNICUTT, whose address is 433 20TH STREET, N.E, WASHINGTON, DC 20002, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of GEORGE A. LEWIS, who died on DECEMBER 22, 2023 with a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 9, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Daily Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

GWENDOLYN HUNNICUTT
Personal Representative

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2/09, 2/16, 2/23/24

LEGAL NOTICES

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2024ADM000058
GENEVA WINSLOW
AKA
GENEVA M WINSLOW
Name of Decedent
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs**

ARVETTE WINSLOW, whose address is 4923 4TH STREET, NW WASHINGTON, DC 20011, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of GENEVA WINSLOW AKA GENEVA M. WINSLOW, who died on OCTOBER 23, 2023 with a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 9, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Daily Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

ARVETTE WINSLOW
Personal Representative

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REGISTER OF WILLS
2/09, 2/16, 2/23/24

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2024ADM000097
SANDRA ETA CRAFT
Name of Decedent
HORACE BRADSHAW
1644 6TH STREET NW
WASHINGTON DC, 20001
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs**

ARTHUR ROGIERS, whose address is 1333 E ST. NE, WASHINGTON DC, 20002, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of SANDRA ETA CRAFT, who died on NOVEMBER 3, 2023 without a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 9, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Daily Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

ARTHUR ROGIERS
Personal Representative

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**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2023ADM001305
THEODORE CONTOUR HARE
Name of Decedent
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs**

JASMINE A. MUSCHETTE & THERESA HARE, whose addresses are 6319 9th ST., NW WASH DC 20011, 3750 JAMISON ST., NE APT. 216 WASH DC 20018, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of THEODORE CONTOUR HARE, who died on APRIL 18, 2021 without a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 9, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Daily Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

JASMINE A. MUSCHETTE
THERESA HARE
Personal Representative

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LEGAL NOTICES

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2023ADM001089
VERNICE SHEARARD
AKA
VERNICE DELORES SHEARARD
AKA
VERNICE D. SHEARARD
Name of Decedent
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs**

RAINYA P. MILLER, whose address is 2609 LA-CROSSE PL, WALDORF MD 20603, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of VERNICE SHEARARD AKA VERNICE DELORES SHEARARD AKA VERNICE D. SHEARARD, who died on OCTOBER 10, 2020 without a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 9, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 9, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Daily Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

RAINYA P. MILLER
Personal Representative

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2/09, 2/16, 2/23/24

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2024ADM000067
DENISE ALEXANDER GREEN
Name of Decedent
ERICA F. GLOGER
GRIFFIN & GRIFFIN LLP
1320 19TH STREET NW #800
WASHINGTON DC 20036
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs**

TAHIRAH ALEXANDER GREEN, whose address is 4224 8TH STREET, NW WASHINGTON DC 20011, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of DENISE ALEXANDER GREEN who died on AUGUST 22, 2022 without a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 16, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 16, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 16, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

TAHIRAH ALEXANDER GREEN
Personal Representative

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2/16, 2/23, 3/1/24

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2024ADM000084
DELORES C. GRIFFIN
Name of Decedent
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs**

PATRICIA D. GRIFFIN, whose address is 10911 MARLBORO CROSSING CT CHELTENHAM MD 20623, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of DELORES C. GRIFFIN who died on JULY 17, 2012 without a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 16, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 16, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 16, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

PATRICIA D. GRIFFIN
Personal Representative

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For More Information
Please call the number above

LEGAL NOTICES

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
2024FEP10
MAY 21, 2020
Date of Death
FLORENCE N. STEWART
AKA
FLORENCE NAOMI STEWART
Name of Decedent**

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT OF FOREIGN PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE AND NOTICE TO CREDITORS

VERNELL P. FERGUSSON whose address is P.O. BOX 60271, HARRISBURG, PA 17106 was appointed representative of the estate of FLORENCE N. STEWART AKA FLORENCE NAOMI STEWART, deceased, by the ORPHAN'S Court for PRINCE GEORGE'S County, State of MARYLAND, on APRIL 12, 2023. Service of process may be made upon SAMANTHA B. SANDERS, 1804 8TH STREET, NW WASHINGTON, DC 20001 whose designation as District of Columbia agent has been filed with the Register of Wills, D.C. The decedent owned the following District of Columbia real property: 2107 SUITLAND TERRACE, SE UNIT #201, WASHINGTON DC 20020. Claims against the decedent may be presented to the undersigned and filed with the Register of Wills for the District of Columbia, Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001 within 6 months from the date of first publication of this notice.

Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 16, 2024
Name of newspaper, and/or periodical:
Daily Washington Law Reporter
AFRO-American

VERNELL P. FERGUSSON
Personal Reperesentative

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2/16, 2/23, 3/01/24

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2017ADM000017
GLADYS WIGGINS
AKA
GLADYS L. WIGGINS
Name of Decedent
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs**

DELORES M. GREEN, whose address is 229 S STREET NE, WASH. DC 20002, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of GLADYS WIGGINS AKA GLADYS L. WIGGINS who died on APRIL 25, 2023 with a Will and will serve with Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 16, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 16, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 16, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

DELORES M. GREEN
Personal Representative

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2/16, 2/23, 3/1/24

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2024ADM000109
JAMES TELFAIR ROBINSON III
Name of Decedent
NATHAN A NEAL ESQ.
LAW OFFICES OF NEAL AND HANEY, PLLC
209 KENNEDY STREET NW
WASHINGTON DC 20011-5214
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs**

RUTH ROBINSON, whose address is 1788 SYCAMORE STREET NW WASHINGTON DC 20012, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of JAMES TELFAIR ROBINSON III who died on OCTOBER 29, 2023 without a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 19, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 19, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 16, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

RUTH ROBINSON
Personal Representative

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LEGAL NOTICES

MBE/WBE
Subcontractors and Suppliers

Ulliman Schutte Construction, LLC, Chantilly, VA is interested in receiving quotes from qualified MBE/WBE subcontractors and suppliers for the Miscellaneous Facility Upgrade – Phase 8 Biosolids Curing Pad bidding on March 14, 2024. Opportunities are available for Specifications Divisions 1 thru 48. Please Fax quotes to 703-434-3714.
Contact Phone : 703-972-6053.
Ulliman Schutte Construction, LLC
14420 Albemarle Point Place
Chantilly, VA 20151
www.ullimanschutte.com
Equal Opportunity Employer

BUDGET FOR A BETTER BALTIMORE
Wednesday, April 17, 2024; 6 PM
In Person at City Hall, 100 N. Holliday St

Online via WebEx

Mayor Brandon M. Scott invites you to Baltimore City's **Annual Taxpayers' Night** hearing. Voice your thoughts and provide input on the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Budget before the Board of Estimates. A link to the virtual event and additional details will be available at bbmr.baltimorecity.gov. Contact budget@baltimorecity.gov for more information or visit bbmr.baltimorecity.gov.

CITY OF BALTIMORE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
OFFICE OF ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION

NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **WATER CONTRACT NO. 1313-Watermain Replacement & Rehabilitation in Upper Fells Point & West Canton Neighborhoods** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M on **April 3, 2024**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates and can be watched live on CharmTV's cable channel 25/1085HD; charmtvbaltimore.com/watch-live or listen in at (443) 984-1696 (ACCESS CODE: 0842939) from City Hall at Noon. The Contract Documents may be examined, without charge, at Contract Administration 4 South Frederick Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202 on the 3 rd floor (410) 396-4041 as of **February 23, 2024** and copies may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **100.00. Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package**. All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors Qualificatio Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact OBC at 4 S Frederick St., 4 th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture ("JV"), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Category required for bidding on this project is **B02551 – Water Mains** . Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$20,000,000.01 to \$25,000,000.00**.

A “Pre-Bidding Information” session will be conducted via Microsoft Team Meeting. Vendor can either call 1 667-228-6519, Phone Conference ID: 365 828 351# on **February 28, 2024** at 11:00 am. Contractor questions shall be submitted via email to Latonia.Walston@baltimorecity.gov by **March 6, 2024** at 4:30 pm. Question submitted after the deadline may not be responded to and Contractors will be required to submit their bids based on the available information.

To purchase a bid book, please make an electronic request at: <https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting> and dpwbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov. For further inquiries about purchasing bid documents, please contact the assigned Contract Administrator Latonia.Walston@baltimorecity.gov

Principal items of work for this contract include, but are not limited to:
Abandonment and/or removal of existing water mains and installation of various sized new ductile iron pipes, valves, fittings, and appurtenances, cathodic protection, pipe restraints, replacement/installation of fire hydrants, small (residential) meter settings and meter vaults, renew and replacement of existing water services, temporary bypass piping, erosion and sediment control measures, maintenance of traffic measures, sidewalk restoration, curb and gutter, and roadway paving, as required.

The MBE goal is **11%** The WBE goal is **5%**

APPROVED:
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:
Richard J. Luna
Interim Director
Department of Public Works

CITY OF BALTIMORE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
OFFICE OF ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION

NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **WATER CONTRACT NO. W.C. 1327R-Chlorine Handling Safety Improvements** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M on **April 3, 2024**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates and can be watched live on CharmTV's cable channel 25/1085HD; charmtvbaltimore.com/watch-live or listen in at (443) 984-1696 (ACCESS CODE: 0842939) from City Hall at Noon. The Contract Documents may be examined, without charge, at Contract Administration 4 South Frederick Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202 on the 3 rd floor (410) 396-4041 as of **February 23, 2024** and copies may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **200.00. Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package**. All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396- 6883 or contact OBC at 4 S Frederick St., 4 th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture ("JV"), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Category required for bidding on this project is **E13003 Water and/or Sewer Treatment Plants and Pumping Stations**. Cost Qualification Range for

LEGAL NOTICES

this work shall be **\$20 Million** to **\$30 Million**.

A “Pre-Bidding Information” session will be conducted virtually on February 29, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. Vendor can access this Microsoft Teams virtual meeting by utilizing the following ID and Passcode. Meeting ID: 264 776 061 501 PASSCODE: 3zbe84. Vendors can call in (audio only) 1-667-401-2804 Phone Conference ID: 861 422 633#.

Site visits for Montebello Plants 1 and 2 will be held on March 6, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. Site visits for five reservoir locations will be held on March 7, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. Attendance at the Pre Bid Information Session and Site Visits is mandatory for all bidders. Contractor questions will be accepted (in writing only) until March 21, 2024. For any questions, please contact Mr. Farid Sikander at farid.sikander@baltimorecity.gov

To purchase a bid book, please make an electronic request at: <https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting> For further inquiries about purchasing bid documents, please contact the assigned Contract Administrator Latonia.Walston@baltimorecity.gov

Principal items of work for this contract include, but are not limited to:
Chlorine Handling Safety Improvements at Montebello Filtration Plants 1 and 2, and at five remote sites located in Baltimore County.

This project includes U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) Loan Funding

The MBE goal is **16%** The WBE goal is **6%**

APPROVED:
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:
Richard J. Luna
Interim Director
Department of Public Works

CITY OF BALTIMORE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
OFFICE OF ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION

NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **WATER CONTRACT NO. 1413-Lake Montebello and Montebello Washwater Lake Dredging** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M on **April 17, 2024**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates and can be watched live on CharmTV's cable channel 25/1085HD; charmtvbaltimore.com/watch-live or listen in at (443) 984-1696 (ACCESS CODE: 0842939) from City Hall at Noon. The Contract Documents may be examined, without charge, at Contract Administration 4 South Frederick Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202 on the 3 rd floor (410) 396-4041 as of **February 23, 2024** and copies may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **150.00. Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package**. All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396- 6883 or contact OBC at 4 S Frederick St., 4 th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture ("JV"), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Category required for bidding on this project is **G90013 Dredging**. Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$20,000,000.01 to \$30,000,000.00**.

A “Pre-Bidding Information” session will be conducted virtually on Microsoft Terms on February 29, 2024 at 10:00 am. Vendor can access Microsoft Teams by utilizing the following ID and Passcode: Meeting ID: 263 700 783 268 Passcode: sjusB2. Vendor can also attend by Phone Conference ID: 470 868 753# on 1-667-401-2804.

A site visit to Lake Montebello and Montebello Washwater Lake will be conducted on Monday, March 4, 2024 at 10:00 am. For any Pre-bid questions, please contact Mr. Farid Sikander at farid.sikander@baltimorecity.gov. Contractor questions shall be submitted (in writing only) by March 29, 2024 by 4:30 pm.

To purchase a bid book, please make an electronic request at: <https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting> and dpwbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov. For further inquiries about purchasing bid documents, please contact the assigned Contract Administrator Doreen.Diamond@baltimorecity.gov

Principal items of work for this contract include, but are not limited to:
Mobilization and furnishing of all labor, material, equipment, and incidents necessary for the removal of alum sludge and filter backwash solids from Lake Montebello and the Washwater Lake and final disposal of the sludge and filter backwash solids in an approved disposal site. The solids will need to be removed from the lakes, dewatered on site to reduce the amount of water to be hauled and disposed, and trucked to a final disposal site. After the work is completed, site restoration of all disturbed areas will be performed.

The MBE goal is **15%** The WBE goal is **8%**

APPROVED:
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:
Richard J. Luna
Interim Director
Department of Public Works

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CITY OF BALTIMORE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
OFFICE OF ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION

NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION CONTRACT NO. 4130RRR-Environmental Restoration Project 15** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M on **April 17, 2024**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates and can be watched live on **Charm TV's cable channel (Channel 25/1085HD): charmtvbaltimore.com/watch-live or listen in at (443) 984-1696 (ACCESS CODE: 0842939)** from City Hall at Noon. The Contract Documents may be examined, without charge, at Contract Administration 4 South Frederick Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202 on the 3 rd floor (410) 396-4041 as of February 23, 2024 and copies may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **100.00. Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package**. All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact OBC at 4 S Frederick St., 4 th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture ("JV"), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Category required for bidding on this project is **D02800 Landscaping and F02200 Earthwork and Site Preparation**. Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$1,000,000.01 to \$2,000,000.00**.

A “Pre-Bidding Information” session will be conducted via Microsoft Team Meeting. Vendor can call 1 667-228-6519 PASSCODE: 527 667 67# on March 5, 2024 at 1:00 PM.

To purchase a bid book, please make an electronic request at: <https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting> For further inquiries about purchasing bid documents, please contact the assigned Contract Administrator Doreen.Diamond@baltimorecity.gov and dpwbidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov

Principal items of work for this contract include, but are not limited to:
Construction of Tier II structural BMPs using environmental site design (ESD) measures including stormwater bump- outs, containing bioswales or micro-bioretenction, open-space bioswale, bioretention, micro-bioretenction, and tree pits (a micro-bioretenction) to attenuate peak runoff discharges and improve water quality.

This is a State Funded Project:

The MBE goal is **22%** The WBE goal is **16%**

APPROVED:
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:
Richard J. Luna
Interim Director
Department of Public Works

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Construction Code Inspector - Electrical Inspector
Custodial Worker
Detention Officer
Environmental Health Specialist I/II - Housing Engineer I
Equipment Operator I
Equipment Operator II
Facilities Maintenance Mechanic I/II
Financial Reporting Manager
Legal Secretary
Legislative Audit Manager
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MICH Case Manager
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Office Support Specialist
Permit Specialist (Planning Technician II)
Planning Technician II
Police Officer Comparative Compliance
Police Officer Lateral
Police Records Management Aide
Senior Equipment Operator
Senior Full Stack Developer (Systems Programmer II)
Sign Fabricator
Survey Field Technician I
Utility Construction Inspector
Water System Technician I/II
Water/Wastewater System Technician I

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Gaming Black: A look at African Americans in the card game space

By Megan Sayles
AFRO Business Writer
msayles@afro.com

The world of Black-owned tabletop games is not just about providing fun. Black game creators provide a refreshing break from what the mainstream has to offer. They draw on the culture and collective experience of the Black community, whether with conversation starters or trivia competitions. When planning your next celebration or get-together with friends and family, consider picking up one of the Black-owned card games below to get the party started.

PO’ UP! Card Game

Georgia native Lizz Rene never intended to become a game maker. She studied public relations at the University of Georgia, and upon graduation, relocated to Washington D.C. Many of the friends she made during undergrad remained in Georgia, but during the holidays, they gathered to catch up and play games.

“One year, I wanted to come up with an icebreaker activity to switch things up, so I wrote some note cards down with nostalgic questions about our time at UGA,” said Rene. “What was supposed to be a 15-minute icebreaker ended up taking the whole party.”

One of Rene’s best friends liked the concept so much, she encouraged Rene to turn it into a business. In 2020, she did just that. The card game PO’ UP! enables players to relive their college days and celebrate Black excellence. Each card in the game is a prompt or open-ended question centered on the Black student experience, and Rene intentionally made the game inclusive for students from historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). The cards are broken into 11 categories, including “Black at a PWI,”



Photos courtesy of PO'UP! Card Game.

Brittane Rowe is the creator of PO’ UP! Card Game, which allows Black students to celebrate and connect over their college experiences.

“HBCU Pride,” “College Broke,” “Nostalgia,” “Greek Life” and “Proud Black Grad.” The game indicates which players must PO’ UP! with the special drink of choice.

“It’s not a trivia game. It’s not about right or wrong answers. It’s about giving you the feeling of being back in your college experience,” said Rene. “For those who are still in college, it’s about being able to celebrate and connect over shared experiences.”

PO’ UP! is available online and in several retailers across D.C., Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, New York, Missouri, Louisiana, Colorado and Georgia.

Lyrically Correct

Cousins Donte Jones and Juelz Rhodes created this music trivia game with their high school sweethearts, Tiffany Jones and Nikki Rhodes in 2020. While scrolling through social media, Nikki Rhodes saw a post that inspired the concept for the game. The Rhodes couple then called on the Jones family to help them formulate a business plan, as Donte Jones spent 10 years in business banking and Tiffany Jones had experience in wholesaling and marketing.

Lyrically Correct tests players’ knowledge on the lyrics of popular songs across genres like 90s and 2000s hip-hop and R&B;



Alexis Taylor/AFRO News

Donte Jones is one of four founders of Lyrically Correct, a music trivia game quizzing players on their knowledge of hit songs. He created the game alongside his wife, Tiffany Jones, and his cousin, Juelz Rhodes, and his wife, Nikki Rhodes, in 2020.

gospel; 80s pop, funk and hip-hop; and 60s and 70s music. The game is available online, on Amazon and in Target stores across the country.

“A lot of times, we can think of a million obstacles that will prevent us from doing what we want to do,” said Donte Jones. “Whether it’s something you want to create or something you want to sell, just do it and figure out the rest later.”

See more on afro.com

Megan Sayles is a Report For America corps member.

LEGAL NOTICES

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2024ADM000099
MARVIN BUTLER
Name of Decedent
KELLY A. BURGY
COUNCIL BARADEL KOSMERL & NOLAN P.A.
125 WEST STREET, 4TH FLOOR
ANNAPOLIS MARYLAND 21401
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs
TANGI YVETTE BUTLER, whose address is 1226 I STREET, NE WASHINGTON DC 20002, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of MARVIN BUTLER who died on SEPTEMBER 29, 2021 without a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 16, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 16, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 16, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

TANGI YVETTE BUTLER
Personal Representative

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REGISTER OF WILLS
2/16, 2/23, 3/1/24

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2023ADM001512
LILLIE M BEDNEY HATCHETT
AKA
LILLIE MAE BEDNEY HATCHETT
Name of Decedent
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs
TERRY ALEXANDER HATCHETT III, whose address is 1730 H STREET NE, WASHINGTON DC, 20002, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of LILLIE M BEDNEY HATCHETT AKA LILLIE MAE BEDNEY HATCHETT who died on NOVEMBER 30, 2022 with a Will and will serve with Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 16, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 16, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 16, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

TERRY ALEXANDERHATCHETT III
Personal Representative

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REGISTER OF WILLS
2/16, 2/23, 3/1/24

Washington Classified Continued from C4

LEGAL NOTICES

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2024ADM000120
EDWIN T AIKEN SR
Name of Decedent
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs
EDWIN T AIKEN JR, whose address is 16 BRYANT STREET NE WASHINGTON D.C 20002., was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of EDWIN T AIKEN SR., who died on NOVEMBER 12, 2023 without a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 23, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 23, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 23, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

EDWIN T AIKEN
Personal Representative

TRUE TEST COPY
REGISTER OF WILLS
2/23, 3/1, 3/8/24

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2024ADM144
JOHN ALBERT SHANKS, JR
Name of Decedent
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs
ORLANDO PIERRE WILLIAMS, whose address is 901 LOTUS RD. SAINT ALBANS, WV 25177, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of JOHN ALBERT SHANKS JR, who died on JANUARY 24, 2021 without a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 23, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 23, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 23, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

ORLANDO PIERRE WILLIAMS
Personal Representative

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REGISTER OF WILLS
2/23, 3/1, 3/8/24

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PROBATE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATION NO.
2024ADM000112
LELIA A FRAZIER
AKA
LELIA ANN FRAZIER
Name of Decedent
Notice of Appointment,
Notice to Creditors
and Notice to Unknown Heirs
MONIQUE CLARK, whose address is 13215 TANEY DRIVE, BELTSVILLE MD 20705 was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of LELIA A FRAZIER AKA LELIA ANN FRAZIER, who died on DECEMBER 17, 2023 without a Will and will serve without Court supervision. All unknown heirs and heirs whose whereabouts are unknown shall enter their appearance In this proceeding. Objections to such, appointment shall be filed With the Register of Wills, D.C., Building A, 515 5th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, on or before AUGUST 23, 2024. Claims against the decedent shall be presented to the undersigned with a copy to the Register of Wills or filed with the Register of Wills with a copy to the undersigned, on or before AUGUST 23, 2024 or be forever barred. Persons believed to be heirs or legatees of the decedent who do not receive a copy of this notice by mail within 25 days of its publication shall so inform the Register of Wills, including name, address and relationship.
Date of first publication:
FEBRUARY 23, 2024
Name of newspaper and/or periodical:
Washington Law Reporter
AFRO American Newspapers

MONIQUE CLARK
Personal Representative

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REGISTER OF WILLS
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BALTIMORE-AREA

Bringing ‘P.E.A.C.E’ to Baltimore, one Black man at a time

By Mekhi Abbott
Special to the AFRO
mabbott@afro.com

“When people ask where our office is— I tell them the streets,” says Devan Martin-Bey.

Martin-Bey is a “violence interrupter” for the P.E.A.C.E Team, a community violence intervention group that specializes in conflict resolution and bridging the Baltimore community together with the resources that many of its Black residents lack.

Founded by Eric Brown Sr. four years ago, The P.E.A.C.E Team focuses its efforts on Black males under the age of 24 living in Baltimore City, as they are “at high risk” of being victims or perpetrators of

“In Baltimore, people don’t speak. Generally, they just go about their business and keep their heads down. Now, when they see our faces, they speak. That’s a good thing, because when you see little changes, you start to see big changes.”

violence. According to the team website, their mission statement is to “liberate Baltimore City residents from poverty, crime and violence through education, mediation and community organizing.”

The violence interrupters serve as mediators, mentors and overseers of the Greater Baltimore community. They work with the residents of Baltimore on a daily basis,

Continued on D2



Dr. Vonnya Pettigrew, CEO of the Root Branch Media Group, has launched a media production facility in Baltimore at 2220 Boston St., complete with event and studio space for creatives.



Photos courtesy of rootbranchmediagroup.com

Root Branch Media Group takes back the block with new \$2.25M media facility

By Layla Eason
Special to the AFRO

Root Branch Media Group, a full-service media production and communications company, has recently expanded and purchased a 14,400-square-foot media production facility located on 2220 Boston St. in Baltimore.

CEO Dr. Vonnya Pettigrew says that the facility will be used to further its partnerships and advance their multiyear contract with Baltimore City schools.

In the program, students will gain skills in the many aspects of media from photography, production, filming, recording, editing and more.

Pettigrew recognizes that—in today’s day and age— future generations are becoming more media-oriented. She is trying to give back to the Baltimore community, creating jobs and opportunities for the youth that will have a long-lasting impact in the future.

In addition to the Root Branch Media Group’s new partnerships, they recently founded a coffee shop that will be located within the building. Pettigrew feels as though coffee shops and production work goes hand-in-hand.

Recently, a new branch has been added, targeting adult outreach development (GROW). The program gives adults and people who did not receive college degrees opportunities to work within media and gain media skills.

“We’re really excited that we are launching our GROW Academy, which is our adult programming. We’re just so excited about what GROW has to offer. And what that would do for adults who also want to be more savvy in the tech and media space,” said Pettigrew.

“We’re essentially creating our own ecosystem so that we can train you up to turn around and hire you and give you the skill set that you too can become an independent contractor or a freelancer.

“We’re essentially creating our own ecosystem so that we can train you up to turn around and hire you and give you the skill set that you too can become an independent contractor or a freelancer.”

position to be a landmark someday so [this is] something that has a legacy that will live on beyond me,” Pettigrew said.

This new space is giving Baltimore citizens youth and adults newfound opportunities that have not been seen in the city yet. With these new sets of skills, the community of Baltimore can grow and expand within the media industry.

Hogan’s run for U.S. Senate is all the buzz among former Capitol colleagues

By Lydia Hurley
Capital News Service

Hogan’s recent decision to run for U.S. Senate comes as a shock to many of the state’s lawmakers — especially Democrats who worked with the former Republican governor and think he wasn’t all that cooperative with the legislature.

Now, he’s aiming to serve as a lawmaker himself, this time on the national level.

Senate President Bill Ferguson, D-Baltimore City, told reporters this week he thought the former governor “did not seem to be an enthusiast of the legislative process.”

“I was very taken aback to see that he is interested in introducing bills, working with legislators, trying to create coalitions to build consensus and pass laws,” Ferguson said. “That’s the role of the U.S. Senate.”

Over a month into the legislative session, Maryland lawmakers are hard at work on their own initiatives in Annapolis. Still, Hogan’s decision to run for Senate has been the talk of the town for many of them.

Nearly a year after his term ended and Democratic Gov. Wes Moore took office, Hogan’s legacy remains a topic of controversy that echoes through the halls of the State House. The former governor vetoed some of Democrats’ favorite bills on topics like abortion, gun restrictions and an education blueprint.

Moore himself aimed a punch at Hogan during the State of the State address

Continued on D2



Capital News Service / Rachel Logan

Larry Hogan, former governor of Maryland, speaks in the governor’s reception room on Sept. 8, 2021.

Remembering the life and legacy of Margo McKay

By Aria Brent
AFRO Staff Writer
abrent@afro.com

On Feb.6, Margo Marquita McKay passed away at the age of 77.

She was born on Oct.9, 1946 in Baltimore to her parents, Gordon McKay and Gary Jones McKay. She was raised in Pittsburgh, Pa., and attended South Hills High School. Following high school she attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tenn. While obtaining her Bachelor of Arts from Fisk, her intellect shined bright as she was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa National Honor Society and she graduated from the historical institution magna cum laude. After receiving her first degree, the ambitious scholar then earned her Juris Doctorate from Georgetown Law Center in Washington D.C.—one of the several places she received her bar association membership



Unsplash / Chirag K

Friends and family members of Margo McKay are mourning her Feb. 6 death.

in. Throughout her career she would earn her bar association membership in Pennsylvania and Virginia as well.

The highly accomplished lawyer started her career as a trial attorney while working for the Civil Rights Division of the U.S Department of Justice. She held a plethora of positions in the legal system throughout her career. She worked as a prosecutor, defense counsel, an administrative judge, a mediator, a corporate attorney, and most notably, she served as assistant secretary for civil rights at the U.S Department of Agriculture from 2006 to 2009.

Fortunate enough to find love twice in her lifetime, she was married to Col. James P. Allen of Philadelphia, Pa. and Edward A. Tibbs of Pittsburgh, Pa. With Allen she would have her three children, Marja Vongerichten, Eric Allen, and Kaila Allen, all of whom were the lights of her life.

It should be noted that regardless of the many professional successes she achieved, none of them compared to the joy of motherhood. She is survived by her three children; her

grandchildren, Chloe Vongerichten and Claire Allen; her sisters Linda McKay and Sonya Davenport; her daughter-in-law Lisa Allen and son-in-law Jean-Georges Vongerichten; her niece Rhonda Jones; and her nephews Justin McKay, William Davenport, Jordan Davenport and Joshua Davenport.

Margo was one of five siblings and is preceded in death by her brothers Gordon Gary McKay and Ronald Keith McKay. She is also preceded by former husband Col. James P. Allen, and both of her parents.



Morgan State student awarded Stephen Long Worcester High Pioneers Club scholarship

By **Aria Brent**
AFRO Staff Writer
abrent@afro.com

The Stephen Long Worcester High Pioneers Club (SL-WHP) is upholding the legacy of the first Black superintendent in the Worcester county area by helping the next generation of Black students continue their education.

Founded just a little under two years ago, SL-WHP is a nonprofit organization focused on highlighting the career and significance of legendary educator, Stephen Long. The organization is also dedicated to providing educational resources to youth and college aged students. SL-WHP vice president, Ronnie Collins Sr., shared why upholding the legacy of Stephen Long is so vital to not only the organization but the progress of the Worcester county community as well.

“Instead of staying in Pennsylvania at Lincoln University, he decided to come back to Pocomoke City—a community he had left many years before. Just as he came back to Pocomoke, we decided that

“We decided that we really needed to put our own resources together and we came up with about \$10,000 by reaching into our own pockets, to establish the initial scholarship. Then we joined hands with the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore and we raised over \$2,000.”

we would come back and look at the educational state of Pocomoke, which in many ways for many students is a



Amir Harmon is the first scholar to receive a scholarship from the Stephen Long Worcester High Pioneers Club. Shown here, Amir Harmon (middle) with grandparents David Waters and Joann Waters.

bit small,” explained Collins. “We set up this organization because Stephen Long stressed higher education, and financial stability as a means to independence and character development. We’ve got to get

when you look at all he did for the education of Black people in Worcester county. However, creating their scholarship was one way the organization knew they could continue to carry the torch that was set ablaze by the historical educator all those years ago.

“We decided that we really needed to put our own resources together and we came up with about \$10,000 by reaching into our own pockets to establish the initial scholarship,” Collins said. “Then we joined hands with the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore and we raised over \$2,000.”

Collins went on to explain that although this is the organization’s first time giving out a scholarship, they’ve already made plans to give out more funding for school in the next few months.

“The first scholarship was for \$1,000. We had given some consideration to granting books, and stipends but

now we’re in the process of endowing that scholarship and that will happen in a couple of months. We’ve started that process so that we can continue to give at a minimum \$500 but \$1,000 is our target.”

Amir Harmon is the first student to receive this

scholarship from SL-WHP. Harmon is a sophomore at Morgan State University, where he’s studying computer science. The young scholar is a native of Snow Hill, Md., a small city in the Worcester county area. Harmon discussed how the legacy of

Stephen Long and the mission of SL-WHP resonate with him.

“I read the book they gave me about Stephen Long and I don’t think what he did is common knowledge and it should be,” stated Harmon “He was big on civil rights and he was the first African American to be a superintendent for his school district. More people need to know about him, especially in the Worcester county area.”

Sharing similar sentiments to SL-WHP, Harmon also feels that Long’s work was trailblazing and should continue to be looked at as a model for their community. Harmon explained that every dollar helps when it comes to paying for school. However, this scholarship is special because of the organization’s mission and how focused they are on helping his community.

“I feel like Stephen Long’s work should be a torch for Black people everywhere but especially in Worcester county,” Harmon stated. “What makes this scholarship so significant is the purpose behind it. We don’t get a lot of attention in Worcester county so I feel like this is really big. It means alot to be the first recipient of this scholarship.”

P.E.A.C.E

Continued from D1

trying to reduce youth crime and violence against youths.

Brown founded the P.E.A.C.E Team when he was finishing up his sentence after being incarcerated. He offers Baltimore youth access to resources that he didn’t have when he was growing up in the city, such as mentorship and proper role models.

He recalls having the feeling that he had thrown his life away getting in trouble with the law, and he is making it his mission to ensure that those coming up in similar circumstances won’t make the same mistakes that he made.

Martin-Bey, alongside other violence interrupters of P.E.A.C.E., literally tie lawn chairs to a street sign on the intersection of Dolphin and Division street. They parole the area from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day. Every morning, they do wellness checks, walks on the area perimeters they cover to make sure everything is OK.

They travel with Narcan, a narcotic used to treat opioid overdoses, and water to assist those in need of help.

“We keep the community clean. We make sure we have good relationships with everyone, and we just try to keep stuff level. There’s a lot of good people around here, you just have to get to know them,” said Druid Heights Violence Interrupter Herbert “Scrap” Daney.

“We’re actually getting people to talk. In Baltimore, people don’t speak. Generally, they just go about their business and keep their heads down. Now, when they see our faces, they speak. That’s a good thing, because when you see little changes, you start to see big changes,” said fellow Violence Interrupter Perry Richards.

The relationship between the Black community and law enforcement has long been a tricky one, but the P.E.A.C.E Team has been able to find ways to mediate and intervene without citizens feeling like they are being neglected or targeted.

“We’ve found that a lot of other organizations have made residents feel like they are occupying forces as opposed to actually engaging with the community. [A lot of times], they come in when something happens and just leave,” said Martin-Bey.

Every calendar year, the P.E.A.C.E Team organizes at least six community building events. They aid with assisting residents in being able to get identification, Social Security information and other basic essentials that most people take for granted, but not everyone has access to.

They also help with job readiness and training. They attribute a lot of their success to their partnership with the

University of Maryland. “Everything that we do, for the most part, the University of Maryland is tied to... They are one of our main contributors,” said Martin-Bey.

Due to their work in the community, the P.E.A.C.E Team received \$1.5 million in December 2022 from the University of Maryland, Baltimore, to implement and expand efforts to ease community-based violence. They also have an office on the University of Maryland, Baltimore’s campus.

Research has also shown that the P.E.A.C.E Team played a part in murder reports on York Road going from eight in 2020 down to zero by 2022. A lot of this can be attributed to the P.E.A.C.E Team’s ability to relate to the community they are working with. In Druid Heights, they have about 10 total violence interrupters.

Martin- Bey says these days, men from around the community remind him of his purpose with the stories of how he and the violence interrupters changed their lives.

“I get a lot of ‘Man, if it wasn’t for you, bro– if it wasn’t for y’all...I’m telling you,’ ” said Martin-Bey, of the testimonies that could easily be stories of lives lost and wasted. “That’s how I know we’re making a difference.”

Hogan

Continued from D1

on Feb. 7, saying that the former executive spent too much time picking fights with the legislature instead of showing “real leadership and engagement” in Annapolis.

Hogan could potentially have some appeal to moderate and independent voters in a general election, as a frequent critic of former president Donald Trump. But Maryland Democrats say this shouldn’t qualify him as a moderate in the minds of voters.

This November, Marylanders will be asked to vote on whether to enshrine abortion rights in the state’s constitution. In 2023, the General Assembly voted to include a referendum on the November 2024 ballot.

Hogan’s administration commits to “finding common ground for a common good,” according to a statement on his Senate campaign website. Hogan’s campaign boasts eight years of successful tax cuts, a balanced budget and a record surplus as governor. Capital News Service has reached out to Hogan’s campaign several times for comment but received no reply.

Some Maryland Republicans believe Hogan has a chance of winning. He has proven he can win in Maryland on a statewide basis and can find a way to map out how to be successful, said Sen. Stephen Hershey, R-Kent, Queen Anne’s, Cecil and Caroline counties.

“A U.S. senator election is going to be certainly based on presidential turnout, where the national candidates are at the time, so many different things that come into play during those elections,” said Hershey.

Hogan was one of the Republican party’s more outspoken critics of former president Donald Trump, who is likely to be at the top of the ticket in the fall. Hogan even claimed he voted for late former president Ronald Reagan over Trump in 2020.

“We haven’t had a Republican in the U.S.

Senate from Maryland since the ‘80s. It will be a challenge for him,” Del. Jason Buckel, R-Allegany, said. A win for Hogan is going to be an “uphill climb,” Buckel said.

After the former governor vetoed several bills with widespread support from Democratic lawmakers, there is “no chance” Democrats in Maryland are going to vote for Hogan, Sen. Cheryl Kagan, D-Montgomery, said.

“He has a terrible record that he’s now going to have to defend. It’s hard to imagine how he could be successful,” Kagan said.

Kagan also voiced concerns about the impression that Hogan is a moderate. “He’s not nearly as moderate as his PR people try to make us believe,” Kagan said.

Senator Benjamin Kramer, D-Montgomery, echoed this sentiment.

“Although he has done an outstanding job of creating this impression that he is a moderate, he is far from that,” Kramer said.

Dereck E. Davis, the state treasurer, a Democrat, said a Hogan win could threaten Democratic control over the U.S. Senate.

“If they were to vote for Gov. Hogan, effectively they’re voting for Mitch McConnell,” said Davis, referring to the Senate Republican leader from Kentucky. “It could flip the Senate.”

Still, he said, it never hurts to have a different point of view like the one Hogan might bring to the national Republican party.

“It’s always good to have diversity of thought. I’m not going to get into internal Republican Party politics,” he said. “But I think it’s healthy when you have various viewpoints . . . It’s great not to have groupthink and rather to have competing ideas.”

This article was originally published by Capital News Service.



The P.E.A.C.E. Team works to decrease violence in the community and the number of Baltimore youth on the streets, engaging in negative behaviors. Shown here, Devan Martin-Bey (left) at a town hall on safety with Retired Judge Wanda Heard and former Baltimore mayor, Sheila Dixon.

Jason Steer begins as Creative Alliance’s executive director



Photo courtesy of Creative Alliance

Beginning his tenure on Feb. 1, Jason Steer, a Black man from England, looks forward to bringing an understanding between culture and the arts to Baltimore’s art community as executive director of Creative Alliance.

By Layla Eason
Special to the AFRO

Creative Alliance recently selected Jason Steer as the new executive director. The organization recently announced Steer’s new role with the company in a press release. Steer joins Creative Alliance after a career at New York’s renowned Apollo Theatre, where he held a variety of senior leadership positions in programming, education, and youth development. With more than 20 years of experience, Steer stands out for his dedication to community involvement, inclusion, strategic program development, and building partnerships throughout his career such as talent

art with a concentration in sociology, which gives him a deep understanding of the relationship between art and culture. This allows him to interact with people who are interested in the arts from different cultural backgrounds. During Steer’s tenure at the Apollo, he was a key contributor to the development of the Apollo’s comprehensive arts & entertainment succession pipeline program, which enabled the development of up-and-coming artists in the arts while fostering strong community connections. Steer has joined Creative Alliance to create a season-long series of three disciplines: roots of creativity, live out loud, and feel the

a canvas where art can be a bridge, connecting diverse experiences and fostering deeper understanding beyond words,” Steer said. “My aspiration is to contribute, even in modest ways, to amplifying the voices of artists and their creations in this vibrant community, championing their stories as they shape the city’s unique identity.” Creative Alliance’s five-year strategic plan focuses on developing programs that promote personal growth and self-empowerment, social cohesion and community, and career development for artists. The alliance’s state-of-the-art Creativity Center opened in November 2022, offering a variety of courses and workshops for teens and adults, as well as free after-school programs for low-income families. In 2024, Amy Seto, Brown Advisory Partner and longtime Creative Alliance patron and supporter, will take office as the organization’s board president.

“We are thrilled to welcome Jason Steer to Creative Alliance and to Baltimore. Jason brings to us his vision and experience in spearheading impactful initiatives and cultivating strategic collaborations. He will lead our beloved staff and organization to new heights,” Seto said in the statement. The Baltimore community will benefit from Steer’s breadth of experience, creative leadership, and dedication to service. Steer’s story continues to be an example of how arts and culture can positively impact lives and communities.

We are proud to present a reprint of the AFRO book “This is Our War,” from seven AFRO war correspondents!

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“My aspiration is to contribute, even in modest ways, to amplifying the voices of artists and their creations in this vibrant community, championing their stories as they shape the city’s unique identity.”

development on and off-screen. “Baltimore presents an exhilarating opportunity for me to merge my personal journey with the diverse narratives of the city,” Steer said, in the statement released about his appointment. “As a creator, an immigrant, and a Black man, I’ve navigated the complexities of being misunderstood, and I’ve witnessed firsthand the transformative power of art in giving voice to the voiceless.” Steer is an inclusivity advocate who uses his innovative thinking to amplify voices that are often silenced, making sure their voices are heard, respected, and empowered. He has a degree in studio rhythm. One of the featured events is the Baltimore Crankie Festival which is a hand-cranked and scrolling panoramic storytelling event featuring live music. The event is set to return in May. Another event is the Great Halloween Lantern Parade and Festival which is celebrating its 25th anniversary and will also be held in May. The final event is the Walk By On exhibition, a collaboration between Baltimore artists and Charm City’s sister city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands. During this event, there will be a series of movement, culinary courses, and creative arts classes in the Creativity Center. “In Baltimore, with its rich cultural tapestry, I see

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Black members of the military honored at BEYA Stars and Stripes Dinner

By Edoghogho Joy Ugiagbe

The BEYA (Becoming Everything You Are) STEM Conference returned to Baltimore Feb. 15-17, highlighting Black innovators in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Complete with panel discussions on artificial intelligence (AI), the role of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the STEM industry and a job fair, the conference drew thousands to the downtown Baltimore area.

Aside from STEM topics, the BEYA conference also included a night of honors for great Black members of the military with the The Stars and Stripes Dinner. The ceremony took place on Feb.16 at the Hilton near the Inner Harbor. The conference is hosted by Career Communications Group, led by chairman and founder, Tyrone Taborn.

AFRO Photo / Edoghogho Ugiagbe



Eric Conway, director of the Morgan State University Choir, addresses the crowd with members of the group behind him.



Maryland Gov. Wes Moore speaks to those gathered.



Judith Wise, with Tyrone Taborn, chairman and founder of Career Communications Group, host of the BEYA conference.



Vice Admiral Anthony Wins serves as host of the BEYA Stars and Stripes dinner.

Black vets honored at Annual Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Banquet

By AFRO Staff

On Feb. 17 Black veterans, military leaders and community members gathered on the campus of Morgan State University for The National Association for Black Veterans' (NABVETS) 24th Annual Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Banquet. The event served as a time to honor local individuals for their service in the armed forces and their communities.

Included on the list of honorees were Dr. Lonnie C. Spruill Jr. and Charlie S. Johnson, co-founders of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity and Groove Phi Groove, respectively. The two received the Parren J. Mitchell Freedom Award. The Jeffries Carey National Achievement Award went to Gerald Stansbury, a leader in the campaign for Dorie Miller to receive the Medal of Honor. Annette Mann was recognized as the Thomas Wynn Veteran of the Year, while Deborah Ivey received the Richard and Josephine Robinson Leadership Award. Educator and Beaufort, S.C. native Freddie Bee was honored with the Sen. Decatur Trotter Humanitarian Award, while N. Ray Staten took home the Ronald Hutchins Valor Award.

Other honorees included Lawrence M. Moses, of the NABVETS Maryland Chapter; union organizer and teacher Dr. Reuben McClain; Arthur Ames, recipient of the Betty Stokes and Gerald Eldridge Commander's Award; Steward V. Redfield Jr., honored with the Paul Thompson Memorial Award; Andrew Pryor, recipient of the John Craig Lifetime Achievement Award; George Jones, who received the Louis Diggs and Robert A. Jones Legacy Award and William Davidson III, recipient of the Jerome Hall Excellence Award.



Maryland Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony Woods and Robert Finn, a senior advisor for the department, prepare to honor another veteran.



The Morgan State University Honor Guard presents colors.



Honoree, Annette Mann, moments after receiving her award.



Honoree, Freddie Bee, receives honors at 91 years old.



Master of Ceremony Clarence "Tiger" Davis, addresses the crowd.



Melvin and Jackie Smullen enjoy the ceremony.

AFRO Photos/ James Fields

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