

Available at your local



Philadelphia *Observer*

50 Cents

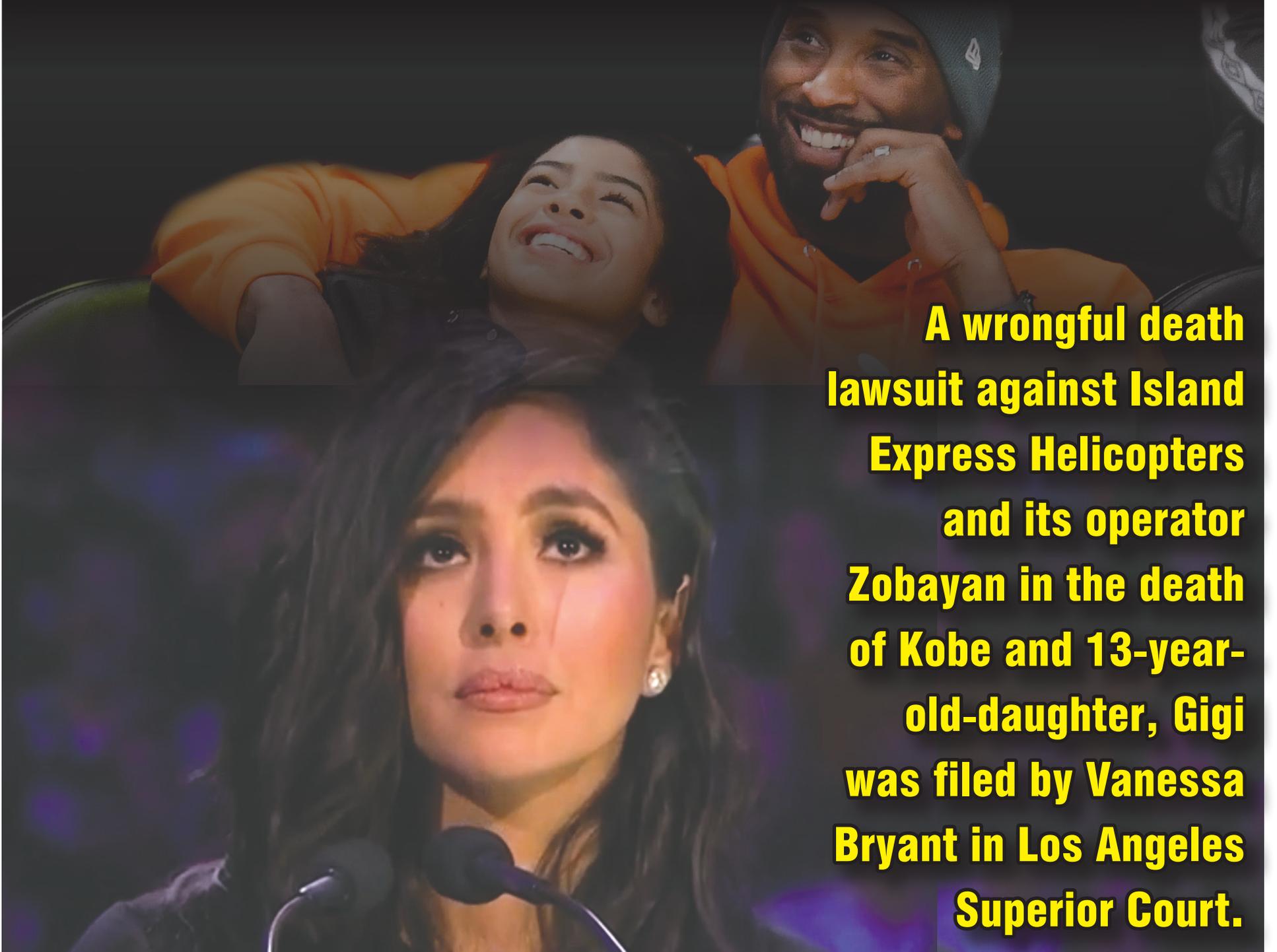
Speaking Truth to Justice

PhiladelphiaObserver.com

Vol. 27 • No. 8

February 27 – March 4, 2020

Vanessa Bryant files WRONGFUL DEATH LAWSUIT



A wrongful death lawsuit against Island Express Helicopters and its operator Zobayan in the death of Kobe and 13-year-old-daughter, Gigi was filed by Vanessa Bryant in Los Angeles Superior Court.

It states the pilot was careless and negligent by flying in cloudy conditions and should have aborted the flight. Law enforcement agencies and tour companies kept their helicopters grounded that morning.



Wuhan Hospital director dies from coronavirus

Philadelphiaobserver.com

The death toll from the novel coronavirus has reached 1,873, as almost half of China's 1.3 billion-strong population remain subject to varying forms of travel restrictions and other quarantine measures.

On Tuesday, Liu Zhiming, director of the Wuchang hospital in Wuhan, the city at the center of the outbreak, himself died of the virus, according to a statement released by local government authorities.

Liu was a neurosurgeon and the most senior health worker known to have died as a result of the coronavirus epidemic. His death could renew criticism that the government has not done enough to protect frontline medical workers, many of whom are overworked and overstretched.

Also on Tuesday, state media reported that doctors and nurses who die while trying to contain the outbreak will officially be designated as "martyrs."

All but five deaths from the virus have occurred inside mainland China, where an additional 98

fatal cases of Covid-19, the disease caused by the virus, were reported Tuesday morning. The number of confirmed cases in China increased by 1,886, bringing the global total to over 73,325.

The vast majority of those cases have been in China, but concern has been growing in the past week over much smaller but growing outbreaks in Singapore, Japan and Hong Kong.

According to China's National Health Commission, since the outbreak began in December, more than 12,500 patients have recovered and been discharged from hospital.

Outside of Hubei, the province of which Wuhan is capital, the number of new cases has dropped for 14 consecutive days. Despite this apparent good news, stringent and often draconian measures are being ramped up in much of the country. This comes as authorities make an effort to return to something like normality in many major cities and commercial hubs, with the long break forced by the outbreak taking its toll on the country's economy

Education of King's life, legacy remains critical for young people, survey shows

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire Senior Correspondent

More than a half-century after the death of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., many of America's youth are still in the dark about the life and legacy of the nation's foremost civil rights leader.

Brainly, the world's largest online learning platform, recently surveyed more than 1,700 U.S. students to understand better what they know – and don't know – about Dr. King, his life, and his legacy.

It turns out; the answer is not much.

According to the data, 63 percent of U.S. students incorrectly identified Dr. King's accomplishments or were not aware of some of the most important things he did to contribute to America's Civil Rights Movement.

As an example, the survey

mit to the fight for equality and inclusion. To remember who we want to be as individuals and as a country," stated Lena Hackett, executive director and managing partner of the Kennedy King Memorial Initiative, a nonprofit based in Indianapolis that works to commemorate the historic speech delivered by Sen. Robert F. Kennedy in Indiana on the night Dr. King was assassinated.

"The best way to commemorate Dr. King is for America to re-read his sermons and gain a renewed appreciation for their timeless wisdom on racial reconciliation, justice, family, and faith," stated Frederick Weaver, a GIS Specialist who researches African American historical figures.

"Then, we must individually and collectively act on that wisdom to solve today's challenges," Weaver stated. MLK Day is a day of service and reflection for America, especially the Black community. It

race, skin color, gender, and sexual orientation.

"It's a time for us to reflect on how much our nation has changed and what we still need to do to foster equality and justice for all," Tran stated.

"I created an organization where we teach current and former foster youth, and beyond, what it means to be confident, have self-worth, respect others and live life as authentic contributing human beings. We teach lessons that are not traditionally taught in school until college, and this includes communication, critical thinking, finance, and health and wellness."

While preschoolers and those in kindergarten may not be prepared to learn intricate details of the civil rights movement, a recent NBC Today Show study noted that elementary school students should be provided books that teach about Dr. King's life and legacy.



found that more than 25 percent of U.S. students said that he did not lead the Montgomery Bus boycott. Also, about 18 percent said they were not aware that Dr. King organized the famous "March on Washington."

What's more, a stunning 19 percent said Dr. King didn't give his most famous speech, "I Have a Dream."

In an email, Brainly officials told NNPA Newswire that its mission is to democratize education and ensure that all students have equal access to the resources they need to be academically successful.

The organization stated that this was particularly important ahead of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as the country and the world reflects on the major impact Dr. King had on the U.S. and the globe, and how his sacrifice has left an indelible impression on the cause for equality.

For those who understand King's legacy, they said education and reflection are most important – particularly in observing the holiday that honors Dr. King.

"MLK Day is a day to recom-

is a time to acknowledge remaining injustices and problems to be fought while celebrating areas where society has improved," Weaver continued.

Lucinda Cross, an author and marketing coach at Activate Worldwide LLC, noted that the best way to commemorate Dr. King's holiday is by "throwing a large 'Dream Board' party where young children and even their parents come together to create dream boards for future goals."

"MLK day means a day to reflect on one man's dream for the nation and how important it is for us to dream big enough for others. Thinking of selfless dreams that can change the communities in which we live, work, and serve," Cross stated.

"MLK day is a day of permission to believe that all it takes is a dream and the belief to verbalize it and act on it in spite of."

Alex Tran, a digital marketing strategist, said he believes the best way for children and all others to commemorate Dr. King is to live a life where respect is given and received freely regardless of

Also, middle schoolers should be taught, or reintroduced, to Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech, which could educate them on stereotypes and other biases.

NBC's study also concluded that high school students should be taught how Dr. King "walked the walk and talked the talk." Teenagers can understand the modern civil rights movement and Dr. King's leading role in it as he risked his life to lead the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 and the March on Washington in 1963, which helped facilitate passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 abolishing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or nationality, NBC researchers stated.

"Martin Luther King Day is the perfect time to get the message across that when there's injustice we need to stand up to it," Steven Friedman, a middle school social studies teacher at the mostly white Brandeis Marin School in San Rafael, Calif., told the network.

"It's also a chance to share a message about the beauty of diversity — something to remember every day," Friedman stated.

Subscribe Philadelphia Observer

405 Lexington Avenue,
26th Floor, New York, NY 10174
212-213-8585.
philaobserver.com

Outgoing Mississippi governor says state faces '1,000 years of darkness' if Black man elected

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire Senior Correspondent

Fifty-two years after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and 55 years after Jim Crow, Mississippi is burning again.

Phil Bryant, the now-former governor of Mississippi – a state that was one of the flashpoints of the civil rights movement, and a haven for the Ku Klux Klan – has sparked understandable outrage after tweeting a racist claim that if the Magnolia State elects its first Black senator, there would be



1,000 years of darkness.

"I intend to work for @cindyhydesmith as if the fate of America depended on her single election," Gov. Phil Bryant tweeted on January 2. "If Mike Espy and the liberal Democrats gain the Senate,

we will take that first step into a thousand years of darkness."

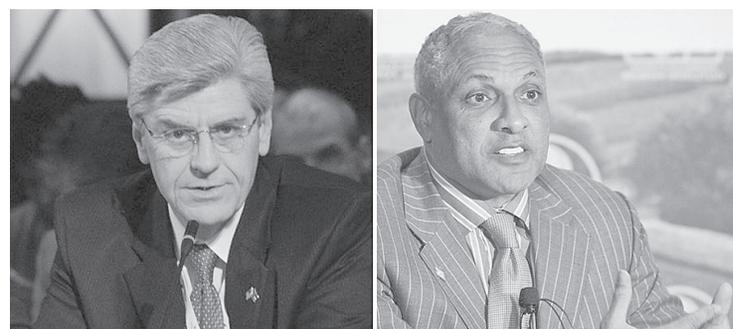
Bryant, a Republican, left office on January 14 after serving two terms.

Espy lost to Hyde-Smith in Mississippi's special U.S. Senate runoff election in 2018. After announcing that he was running again this year, Espy said he could win by building a diverse coalition of voters.

With a victory, Espy would become Mississippi's first Black senator in more than 139 years.

"We're going after everybody

Continued on page 10



Outgoing Mississippi governor says state faces '1,000 years of darkness' if Black man elected

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire Senior Correspondent

Fifty-two years after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and 55 years after Jim Crow, Mississippi is burning again.

Phil Bryant, the now-former governor of Mississippi – a state that was one of the flashpoints of the civil rights movement, and a haven for the Ku Klux Klan – has sparked understandable outrage after tweeting a racist claim that if the Magnolia State elects its first Black senator, there would be 1,000 years of darkness.

"I intend to work for @cindyhydesmith as if the fate of America depended on her single election," Gov. Phil Bryant tweeted on January 2. "If Mike Espy and the liberal Democrats gain the Senate, we will take that first step into a thousand years of darkness."

Bryant, a Republican, left office on January 14 after serving two terms.

Espy lost to Hyde-Smith in Mississippi's special U.S. Senate runoff election in 2018. After announcing that he was running again this year, Espy said he could win by building a diverse coalition of voters.

With a victory, Espy would become Mississippi's first Black senator in more than 139 years.

"We're going after everybody — white, black, Democrat, persuadable Republican, persuadable moderates and those in the middle," Espy told the AP in November 2019.

"But I know where they are now.



"I'm not flying blind." During his first campaign against Hyde-Smith, a video surfaced showing her praising a supporter by saying she'd attend a "public hanging" if he invited her.

Bryant rekindled those sentiments with his tweet, setting social media ablaze with anger.

Many pointed out the state's history of racism and recent and ongoing problems at Parchman Prison, a former plantation that housed hundreds of slaves and whose population includes more than 60 percent Blacks; the state's debtor's prison that punishes mostly African Americans; and a recent state Supreme Court decision to affirm a 12-year prison sentence for a Black man who turned over a cell phone to a corrections officer.

"Darkness follows Mississippi Gov Phil Bryant around," feminist Paula Cain wrote on Twitter. "Every time that old white man opens his racist, uneducated mouth — darkness flows out."

Sharon Raynor, a retired military officer, agreed with Cain. "The Mis-

Continued on page 7

Vanessa Bryant files wrongful death suit against helicopter company in death of Kobe, Gigi

By Brianna Nargiso

On the same day that thousands gathered in the Los Angeles Staples Center to memorialize super star Kobe Bryant and his daughter, GiGi, it was announced later that Vanessa Bryant, widow of Kobe Bryant, has filed a wrongful death suit against helicopter company, Island Express claiming the lives of her husband and daughter was the result of pilot negligence.

The lawsuit filed by Bryant's lawyers alleges that Island Express is responsible for the Jan. 26, 2020 plane crash into a Calabasas hillside that killed Kobe and Gianna.

The lawsuit states that the pilot, Ara Zobayan, was flying at an accelerated rate and under extremely foggy conditions when the helicopter crashed and killed Kobe and Gianna Bryant along with seven others. The lawsuit also states that the defendant, Island

Express Helicopters allowed the flight with "full knowledge" that the Sikorsky S-76B helicopter was flying in "unsafe weather conditions."

According to the Los Angeles Times, the complaint in Los Angeles County Superior Court against Fillmore-based Island Express Holding Corp. and Island Express Helicopters alleges that pilot Ara Zobayan, who also died in the crash in Calabasas, failed "to use ordinary care in piloting the subject aircraft" and was negligent.

Zobayan was also reprimanded in 2015 for reckless flying, ignoring visibility rules that prohibited flying, reported TMZ Sports.

Kobe Bryant, the complaint alleges, died "as a direct result of the negligent conduct of Zobayan" for which "the company is vicariously liable in all respects," reported the Los Angeles Times.

Defendants in the lawsuit are listed as Island Express and the estate of Zobayan.



USA Today notes that although there is no dollar amount listed in the lawsuit, Bryant is suing for general, economic and punitive damages.

The news of the lawsuit comes after the memorial service of Kobe and Gianna at the Staples Center in Los Angeles celebrated the life of the father daughter duo that was cut short on Jan. 26, 2020. Both Kobe and Gianna were travelling in a helicopter from John Wayne Airport to Camarillo Airport for a basketball game before hitting a mountain at 1700 feet, killing all people onboard.

Trump admin cuts food stamps for at least 700,000 Americans

By Lauren Victoria Burke, NNPA Newswire Contributor

The Trump Administration has finalized implementation of new work requirement rules that would cut food stamp benefits for 700,000 Americans. The average food stamp payout is \$36 per month. Though the Trump Administration estimates that under 700,000 people will be impacted by their policy changes, the Urban Institute estimates that the new Trump Administration rule changes will cause 3.7 million poor people to lose food stamps.

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue and Brandon Lipps, the deputy undersecretary for the USDA's Food Nutrition and Consumer Services, spoke with reporters for under 20 minutes regarding the changes. The rule changes will take effect on April 1, 2020.

The work requirement rule

change will cause hundreds of thousands of people to lose access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP.

There are over 40 million people in the U.S. living in poverty — 1 of every 7 Americans and 12 percent of the total population. In the U.S., 27 percent of African Americans live in poverty and 46 percent of African American children (under age 6) live in poverty, compared to 14.5 percent of white children.

"We're taking action to reform our SNAP program in order to restore the dignity of work to a sizable segment of our population and be respectful of the taxpayers who fund the program. Americans are generous people who believe it is their responsibility to help their fellow citizens when they encounter a difficult stretch. That's the commitment behind SNAP, but, like other welfare programs,



it was never intended to be a way of life," Secretary Perdue told reporters.

"Trump has called people liars and maniacs, caged children, and cut food stamps, and tried to take away health insurance and let people die. But Republicans are outraged that a law professor used his son's name in an analog-

gy?" wrote Rev. Dr. William Barber referring to an exchange at a Dec. 4th impeachment hearing and food stamp cuts. Barber has been focused on a new age "poor people's campaign" mirrored on the efforts of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the 1960s.

"This is cruel and disgraceful. Donald Trump will happily give

millions of dollars in tax breaks to his billionaire buddies—but he's making it harder for struggling families to be able to eat. I'll reverse this shameful policy," wrote 2020 presidential candidate and U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA).

The rule change would limit states and force them to restrict food stamp use to areas that have a 6 percent unemployment rate or higher. The national unemployment rate in October was 3.6 percent.

Income inequality and cuts to poverty programs are likely to be an issue in the 2020 campaign.

Lauren Victoria Burke is an independent journalist for NNPA and the host of the podcast BURKFILE. She is also a political strategist as Principal of Win Digital Media LLC. She may be contacted at LBurke007@gmail.com and on twitter at @LVBurke

Black history



Michelle Obama's thigh-high slit is the talk of the internet in throwback pic to support voter registration

Philadelphiaobserver.com

Michelle Obama is trying to help rock the vote and get young people to the polls.

The former First Lady has joined forces with When We All Vote and MTV and shared a throwback prom pic in support of the #PromChallenge, CBS News reports.

The Prom Challenge initiative was created to help get students to register to vote ahead of the November presidential election.

The "Becoming" author posed

with a prom date in 1982, who was not Barack, sporting a silky polka-dot dress with a thigh-high slit and sitting in a wicker chair to take her obligatory prom picture.

"Throwing it back to my 1982 prom night and this pink satin, polka-dotted dress," she wrote on Instagram.

"If you're a student or teacher, join the #PromChallenge with @WhenWeAllVote and @MTV and tell us what your school is doing to register students to vote," she wrote.

Wake Forest apologizes for slavery in university's past

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (AP) — The president of Wake Forest University issued a public apology Thursday for the institution's past involvement in slavery.

President Nathan Hatch's apology, delivered in a speech during the school's Founders' Day ceremonies, comes after a series of events stirred up racial tension on the campus, including anonymous, racist emails sent to faculty members last year. Schools around the South and beyond have been grappling in recent years with what to do about past ties to slavery or white supremacy.

"It is important and overdue that, on behalf of Wake Forest University, I unequivocally apologize for participating in and benefiting from the institution of slavery," Hatch said during his remarks on campus. "I apologize for the exploitation and use of enslaved

people — both those known and unknown — who helped create and build this university through no choice of their own."

He made no mention of the recent tension on the campus resulting from a threatening email that caused the head of the sociology department to shut down his building and suspend classes for a week. A statement issued after his remarks noted that Hatch last year convened a committee to look at race issues and the legacy of slavery on campus. During Hatch's remarks, some students stood up in a silent demonstration. Senior Alexander Holt, who helped organize the gesture, said in an emailed statement before the event that they planned to stand in recognition of the involuntary sacrifices of enslaved people and the continuing impact of slavery's legacy on current students.



PART THREE SIT IN

60 years ago—students launched a sit-in movement

By Dr. Kelton Edmonds,

Unique Weapons for Non-violent Students

In addition to the typical traits that come along with youthfulness such as idealism and impatience, student success during the 1960 sit-ins and thereafter was directly affixed to two distinct assets possessed by students juxtaposed to their older adult activist counterparts. The first asset is condense demographics, as student-body populations were primarily located on campuses and/or nearby the colleges.

The fact that hundreds to thousands of students in a college town lived within a square mile of each other led to the expeditious mobilization of large numbers of people and efficient dissemination of information and strategy.

Although black churches proved to be invaluable throughout the Black Freedom Struggle from Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Movement, there was still no equivalent amongst the older black generation to the college campus' effectiveness as both a meeting place and as a domicile for housing and dispersing the shock troops of the movement.

The second major asset specific to students would be the relation between arrest and reprisal. At some of their demonstrations prior to 1960, older black activists strategically triggered their arrests for charges such as trespassing or loitering as a way to dramatize unjust treatment via media coverage and to pressure white officials to change discriminatory laws



Once mobilized per the sit-ins however, student activists were able to invite and withstand incarceration for far longer periods of time and in extremely larger numbers. Students vastly elevated this critical strategy of the overall movement. During 1960 and beyond, the enormous numbers unleashed by black student activists put unyielding pressure on local law enforcement, political officials and jail facilities. In many cities like Greensboro, there were not enough jail cells for all of the students arrested, particularly since the students refused bail and chose to remain incarcerated.

This action severely drained local municipalities of money and resources, forcing local governmental, business and law officials to dramatically adjust policies and sometimes change discriminatory

laws. Student activists were able to perfect this strategy because they could endure prolonged imprisonment without fear of major job or housing reprisal.

Comparably, many older activists, whose families depended on their incomes, could not sacrifice prolonged periods of incarceration, as it would threaten their livelihood. Furthermore, angry employers or landlords, who disapproved of their protest activities, could threaten to fire them or abruptly remove them from property they were renting.

Students were not confronted with the same ramifications of these economic, employment and housing reprisals, as the majority of them lived on campuses and perhaps had part-time, albeit

Continued on page 12

New investigation possibly underway into James Brown's death

Philadelphiaobserver.com

The Godfather of Soul is back — or at least investigations into his death may be.

Iconic singer, songwriter, dancer, musician, record producer and bandleader James Brown died, reportedly of heart failure in 2006 at age 73. But the Fulton County district attorney is taking another look at his death after a woman surfaced with a surprising claim, WBS-TV2 reported.

The Associated Press is reporting that a woman named Jacque Hollander contacted Fulton County District Attorney Paul Howard's office to request a meeting, claiming Brown's death was caused by another person, according to the prosecutor's spokesman Chris Hopper. Howard met with Hollander on Wednesday and accepted a bin of materials she said related to Brown's death.

Howard will look at the ma-



terials Hollander brought and will decide whether to open an investigation, Hopper said.

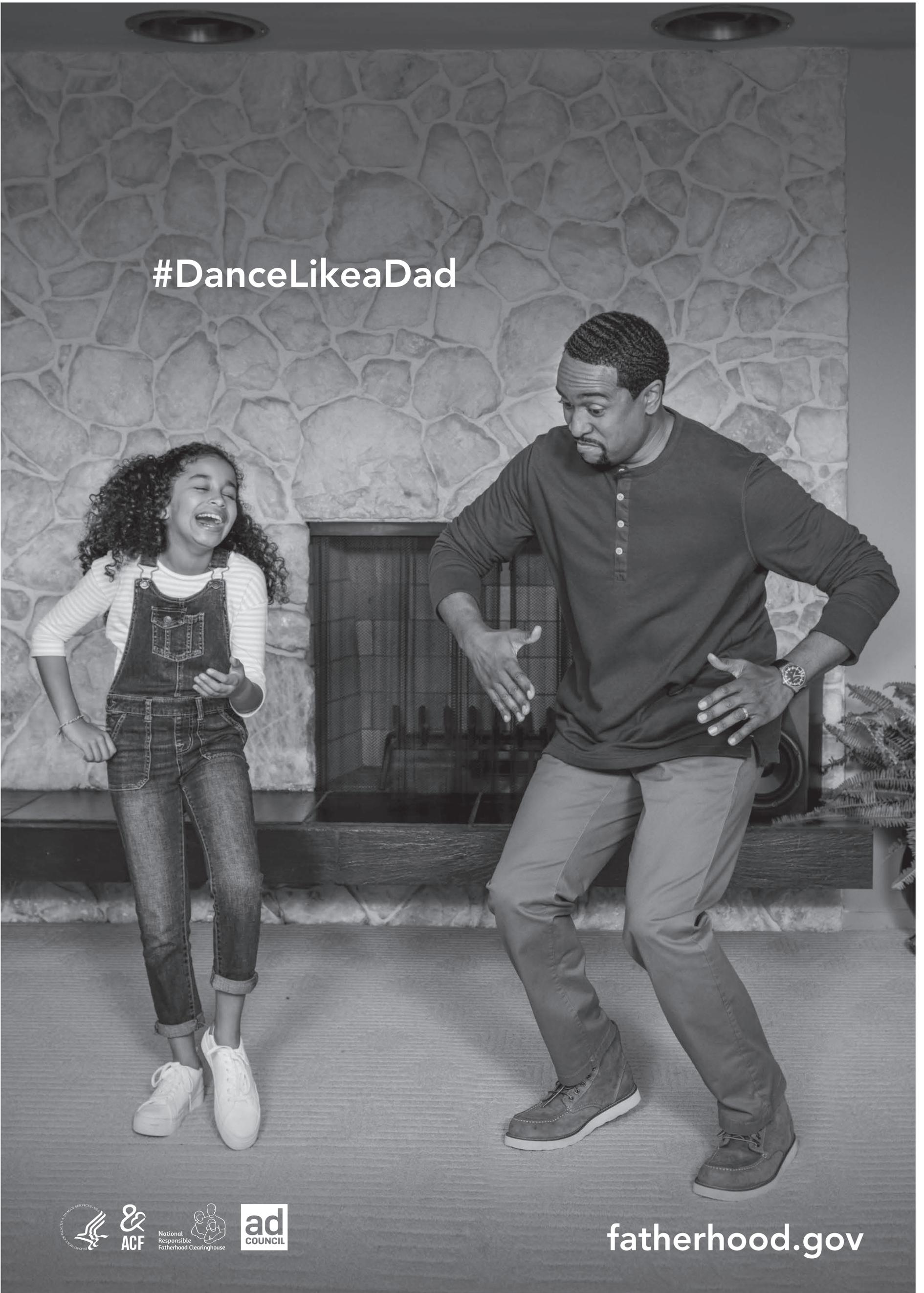
Last year CNN published a 3-part investigative series that raised questions about Brown's death. According to the series, 13 people, including Brown's manager, his son Daryl, his last wife, a man who claimed to have taken a vial of Brown's blood from the hospital and Hollander wanted either an autopsy or a criminal investigation. Hollander, who was a circus singer, first called CNN in 2017 alleging that Brown had been murdered.

CNN said it was Hollander who met with the district attorney on Wednesday and that she'd tried to arrange the meeting in 2019, but she says no one called her back. Howard agreed to meet with her in January after CNN asked the prosecutor's spokesman about her calls. He even allowed a CNN reporter and a camera crew into the conference room during the interview.

It's worth mentioning that in 2017, Marvin Crawford, the doctor who signed that certificate, said in an interview with CNN that he'd always wondered what exactly caused his heart failure and whether Brown's sudden death had been caused by a toxic substance.

"He changed too fast," Crawford said. "He was a patient I would never have predicted would have coded. ... But he died that night, and I did raise that question: What went wrong in that room?"

#DanceLikeaDad



fatherhood.gov

Editorial

Philadelphia Observer

National Urban League, BET launch #ReclaimYourVote

By Marc H. Morial

“Voter suppression isn’t guns and hoses and bully clubs and Bull Connor. It’s administrative burdens that interfere with your right to vote. In the south they try to stop you from getting on the rolls ... and to stay on the rolls ... and have your ballot be counted. We need our democracy to work, we need poverty to end, we need disenfranchisement to be a thing of the past, because when people are suppressed or oppressed it rages. It may be silent for some time but eventually it will come out.” – Stacey Abrams

During a hearing in 2017, California Congresswoman Maxine Waters secured her place as a social media hero when she dismissed the evasive meanderings of Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin with the stern and uncompromising retort, “Reclaiming my time.”

Now, the National Urban League and BET Networks have turned Rep. Maxine Waters’ iconic catchphrase, into rallying cry.

#ReclaimYourVote is a social change

campaign committed to harnessing Black collective power and increasing Black participation in the 2020 Census and the 2020 Election.

With its primary channel reaching more than 90 million households, BET Networks is the nation’s leading provider of quality entertainment, music, news and public affairs television programming for the African American audience.

The biggest part of Russia’s insidious operation to disrupt the 2016 Presidential election was aimed at dissuading Black Americans from voting, as our 2019 State of Black America® report revealed. This illegal foreign operation unfortunately aligned perfectly with a wave of racially-motivated voter suppression laws that have swept the nation over the last several years.

#Reclaim Your Vote is our response.

Fully half the states in the nation have enacted restrictive voter suppression laws, aimed at racial minorities, over the last 10 years. The 2013 Supreme Court decision in Shelby v. Holder, which gutted a key

provision of the Voting Rights Act, opened the floodgate for racially-motivated voter suppression.

Texas, for example, passed a strict voter-ID law that allows voters to use a handgun license to vote, but not a student ID from a state university. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, more than 80 percent of handgun licenses issued to Texans in 2018 went to white Texans, while more than half of the students in the University of Texas system are racial or ethnic minorities.

Meanwhile, Russia’s campaign to disrupt and influence our democracy continues. We must be vigilant against misinformation about the candidates and any efforts to mislead voters about the election. One of the most common tactics of hostile foreign actors is to abuse the trust in movements like #BlackLivesMatter to insinuate themselves into online communities to spread lies and dissuade Black people from voting.

The nationwide #ReclaimYourVote campaign will layout the most significant issues,



break down otherwise confusing processes, and highlight specific ways where we can reclaim our collective power by harnessing the power of media, entertainment, and technology to drive civic engagement.

The next phases of #ReclaimYourVote will focus on rallying the community around the critical matters that directly affect them with issues-based content and comprehensive analysis.

Normalcy

By Dr. E. Faye Williams, Esq(TriceEdneyWire.com) –

Normalcy. Dictionary.com defines normalcy as: the quality or condition of being normal, as the general economic, political, and social conditions of a nation; normality. While overly broad, it’s easy to believe that most citizens of this nation would accept this definition as accurate. Amazingly, the example given for word usage was: After months of living in a state of tension, all yearned for a return to normalcy.

Not so amazingly, I accept that our loss of normalcy shapes the state of our current national distress. What’s worse – under #45–there is little hope of relief from the state of flux we now endure. Confusion and uncertainty occupy more space in my future concerns than at any other time in my life. What is certain is that I yearn for a time, as those just a few short years ago, where things weren’t perfect, but where we weren’t subject to the unlawful, perverse whims of a would-be tyrant and those who would support him blindly.

The majority of voters knew better. We voted, and not for him. We knew him to be



racist, misogynistic, and lacking in values and character. He was self-described, and described by those closest to him, as a disruptor whose primary goal was to destroy the institutional fabric of the nation. Although not completely successful, in three years we have seen him take giant steps toward his singular rule as we hope, pray and act to prevent his stated goals.

Rather than working for the benefit of the entire nation, he first, with the support of a Senate and House of Representatives corrupted by the goal of perpetual power, began to pass laws which had no effect other than to enrich the wealthy. When his laws and Executive Orders didn’t directly enrich the already rich, they were motivated by a racist and infantile effort to erase the legacy of President Obama.

Many have grown so weary of the on-going litany of breaches of presidential protocols, practices and traditions that they have given up their protests of his conduct for the safer tact of “praying for divine relief.” Many more, I believe, have failed to correctly anticipate how the pieces of his strategic jigsaw puzzle fit together.

Our government of three co-equal branches has been coopted by an Executive Branch which has manipulated the judiciary with the lifetime appointments of scores of unqualified judges and enlisted the assistance of a cooperative Senate to maintain the gridlock of legislative inaction. Within the Executive Branch, he has established a revolving door of cabinet and staff that make his judgments and whims the only constants in administration policy.

Most alarmingly, his recent forays into the judicial process – military and civilian – are disturbing to the core. His act of reversing the judgment of a military court released a war criminal with the additional effect of eroding confidence in the military chain-of-command and the standards of conduct servicemembers are bound to uphold.

The recent pardons/commutation of sentences for 11 Federally convicted criminals are within his constitutional authority, but were they purposed to uphold justice? To the contrary, I believe they were issued with the desire to condition the public to accept any action he might choose to take. His actions are those of a monarch, not a president. But he’s already told us of his intention to remain in office – like a king.

It’s not normal to be able to “boil a frog.” The key to boiling the frog is to turn the heat up gradually so it won’t notice.

Even when our “normal” is disrupted by perverse mismanagement, we have the capacity to access and reject the disruption. We have the capacity and the responsibility.

(Dr. E. Faye Williams is National President of the National Congress of Black Women. She’s also host of “Wake Up and Stay Woke” on WPFW-FM 89.3 radio.)



#WeAreAmerica

Celebrate the diversity that makes America, America. Add your photo to the true portrait of America at lovehasnolabels.com



Katherine Johnson pioneering NASA mathematician featured in “Hidden Figures” dies at 101

By Lauren Victoria Burke, NNPA Newswire Contributor

Katherine Johnson, the legendary NASA physicist and mathematician whose work played a key role in the early successes of the U.S. space program, passed away at 101 years old on the morning of February 24 in Newport News, Va. Johnson played a pivotal role in helping the U.S. land men on the moon during the space race in the 1960s and was portrayed by actress Taraji P. Henson in the 2017 film “Hidden Figures.” The book based on the film by the same name was written by Margot Lee Shetterly.

With little more than a pencil and a slide rule Johnson calculated the exact trajectories for Apollo 11 land on the moon in 1969. and, after Neil



Former NASA mathematician Katherine Johnson is seen after President Barack Obama presented her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Tuesday, Nov. 24, 2015, during a ceremony in the East Room of the White House in Washington. (Photo: NASA/Bill Ingalls, Wikimedia Commons)

Johnson worked in a world where errors were fatal.

The lives of three brilliant African American women were featured in the book and subsequent film. They were Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, who passed in 2008, and Mary Jackson who passed in 2005. Vaughan and Jackson were from Hampton, Va. and Johnson was from West Virginia. Johnson graduated from West Virginia State University and West Virginia University.

Johnson was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal on November 8, 2019, after House Science Committee Chairwoman Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson's passed legislation to honor her.

“We’re saddened by the passing of celebrated #HiddenFigures mathematician Katherine Johnson. Today, we celebrate her 101 years of life and honor her legacy of excellence that broke down racial and social barriers,” tweeted NASA after news of Johnson’s passing.

In September 1960 mathematician Katherine Johnson published NASA’s first scientific paper to name a woman as author. Johnson’s trajectory calculations were vital to the US space missions.

“There were no textbooks, so we had to write them,” Johnson said.

“It is with deep sadness that I learned of the passing of Katherine Johnson, a truly brilliant mathematician and pioneer. She broke down barriers as one of the few African-American women mathematicians working at the Flight Dynamics and Control Division at NASA Langley,” wrote Congressman Bobby Scott who represents Newport News, Va.

“Her work helped put the first Americans in space and send the Apollo 11 astronauts to the moon, thereby helping the United States win the Space Race. While I knew Katherine Johnson and her family personally for many years, like so many Americans I never fully



appreciated the work that she, Dorothy Vaughn, Mary Jackson, Christine Darden and the many other African American women at NASA trailblazed for so many until their untold story was revealed in Hidden Figures. Mrs. Johnson was a true American hero, and we were so proud to have her call Hampton Roads home. I want to send my deepest condolences to her family and friends, and to everyone who was inspired by her remarkable life and work,” Rep. Scott added.

“Today we mourn the loss of an American hero and a pioneer for women and African Americans in STEM fields. Katherine Johnson played a pivotal role in the outcome of the space race during her 35-year career at NASA and its predecessor, NACA. Without her accomplishments and those of her fellow Hidden Figures, which went largely unrecognized until the last decade, the outcome of the Space Race may have been quite different. Her achievements and impacts on our country are great, and her loss will be felt by many. I send my heartfelt condolences to her loved ones and colleagues,” NASA said in a statement.

“We’ve lost an icon and brilliant mathematician with the passing of Katherine Johnson. A barrier breaker and inspiration for women of color everywhere, Katherine’s legendary work with NASA will forever leave a mark on our history. My heart goes out to her family and loved ones,” said Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA)

bring about the fourth impact,” Jurado stated.

“We’re talking about the same man who, after Hyde-Smith came under fire for her lynching comments, went on a podium and compared Black women getting abortions to genocide. Hyperbolic racism just seems to be this dude’s go-to.”

In a June 1964 profile, The New York Times called Mississippi “the most segregated state, and noted that, “Through most of the state’s history, the White supremacists have been able to control government at the local and state levels.”

A 2019 lawsuit filed by three Black residents challenged Mississippi’s requirement that candidates running for statewide office must win both a majority of the popular vote and at least 62 of 122 state House of Representatives districts.

The law, which was put into place in 1890 when White politicians openly sought to suppress the Black vote, states that no candidate fulfills both requirements, the House then decides a statewide election, and representatives aren’t required to

vote along with their districts.

“This racist electoral scheme achieved, and continues to achieve, the framers’ goals by tying the statewide election process to the power structure of the House,” the plaintiffs stated in the lawsuit.

“So long as white Mississippians controlled the House, they would also control the elections of statewide officials.”

In an op-ed about Mississippi for The Atlantic late last year, Jesmyn Ward, an author who teaches creative writing at Tulane University, said racism makes itself known very vocal and confrontational ways.

“But perhaps the most tragic manifestation of racist sentiment in Mississippi is silent. Built into the very bones of this place. My state starves its people and, in doing so, actively resists Dr. Martin Luther King’s legacy,” Ward stated.

“Our Republican lawmakers have made an effort to undercut programs that serve the poor, maybe because so many people of color in Mississippi live in poverty and depend on social programs for help.”

Remembering

Lifestyle, guru, model, author Barbara Elaine Smith

By Erin Donnelly

Five years after announcing that she had been diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s disease, Lifestyle Guru B. Smith has died. The restaurateur and cookbook author’s husband, Dan Gasby, announced that the 70-year-old former model died at her Long Island, N.Y. home on Feb. 22 while receiving hospice care for the disease.

Gasby’s announcement included an obituary hailing his wife’s many accomplishments, from being the first Black woman to cover Mademoiselle magazine during her time as a model, to hosting the popular syndicated lifestyle show B. Smith with Style, in which she espoused her signature design philosophy: “Whatever you do, do it with style!”

Between her string of B. Smith restaurants, TV show, cookbooks and numerous retail collaborations, Smith’s post-modeling career saw her establish herself as a multitasking entertainment expert and diverse alternative to Martha Stewart.

Her Bed Bath & Beyond home collection launched in 2001, with major retailers including Macy’s, Home Depot, Kohl’s and Stein Mart also tapping her for product ranges. In 2013, however, the Pennsylvania native was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s disease, a devastating blow she publicly revealed in June 2014.

She and husband Gasby chronicled her health battle in the 2016 book



B. Smith pictured in 2012 (Photo: Wendell Teodoro/WireImage)

Before I Forget: Love, Hope, Help, and Acceptance in Our Fight Against Alzheimer’s. In 2019, Gasby addressed his wife’s deteriorating health amid news that he had embarked on a relationship with another woman while still living and caring for his ailing wife — a situation he described to the Washington Post as “if This is Us and Modern Family came together.”

“Barbara’s being cared for and loved,” he told Page Six last year. “She’s not in a box. Not struggling or dying. I take care of Barbara. I’ll always take care of her.” B. Smith is survived by husband Dan Gasby and stepdaughter Dana Gasby. Tributes have poured in for Smith since news of her death broke, with many hailing her as a pioneer for women of color.

Janet pays tribute to Ja’net: “I’ll miss you”

By Eric Todisco

Janet Jackson is honoring the life and legacy of her late “Good Times” Co-star, Ja’net DuBois. Following DuBois’ death at age 74, Jackson — who played (Penny Gordon Woods), the adopted daughter of DuBois’ character (Willona Woods) in “Good Times” — shared a sweet Instagram tribute in honor of the late actress.

“I am so very saddened to hear my longtime friend Ja’net DuBois has passed away. I saw first hand how she broke stereotypes and changed the landscape for Black women in entertainment,” Jackson, 53, wrote alongside a series of photos of the pair.

“I’m grateful in recent years I had a chance to see her and create more lasting memories. I pray for comfort for all her family and friends. Thank you Ja’net, I’ll miss you,” Jackson added.

DuBois’ “Good Times” character was a close family friend and neighbor to the Evans Family. She was known for being independent, generous and always up for fun.

The show followed Florida and James Evans as they raised their children in a Chicago housing project. The series first aired in February 1974 and ended after six seasons in 1980.

Along with Jackson, many celebrities have paid tribute to DuBois following the news of her death, including Holly Robinson Peete, Loni Love and DL Hughley. The Glendale Police Department told PEOPLE that officers responded to a call regarding DuBois “not breathing.” Officials later deter-



Janet Jackson and Ja’net DuBois

mined that DuBois was deceased.

Glendale Police Sgt. Dan Stubbs told the Associated Press that DuBois appeared to have died of natural causes and there is no ongoing investigation into her death. A rep for DuBois did not respond to PEOPLE’s request for comment.

In addition to her famous “Good Times” role, DuBois appeared in a number of television series including “The Love Boat,” “The Facts of Life,” “Beverly Hills, 90210,” “ER” and “The PJs,” where she starred as (Mrs. Avery). DuBois’ Hollywood career landed her a TV Land Impact Icon Award for “Good Times” in 2006 and an Emmy Award for Outstanding voice-over Performance for The PJs.

She also famously sang and co-wrote The Jeffersons theme song, “Movin’ On Up.” Ja’net DuBois is survived by her three children Rani, Yovanne and Burghardt DuBois. Her son, Raj Kristo Gupta, died in 1987 after a three-year battle with cancer, according to EW.

Outgoing Mississippi governor says state faces ‘1,000 years of darkness’ if Black man elected

From page 3

Mississippi governor is still living in the Jim Crow era,” Raynor stated.

Alvon Phillips, a medical technician, said the comments are in line with what the state represents.

“Anyone can clearly see how racist and prejudiced this Mississippi governor is and what race of people he truly represents; the only race whose interest he cares to advance,” Phillips stated. “Now, you can understand why Mississippi is last in everything. Last in education, wages, and development.”

Journalist Joe Jurado analyzed Bryant’s comments in a January 9 article for The Root.

“Mississippi has a very long and very violent history of racism: 600 black people were lynched between 1877 to 1950, the most of any state,” Jurado recalled.

“Up until 2017, the state still had predominately segregated schools. This makes it all the more surprising than the governor believes Mike Espy being elected to the Senate would open the doors of Guf and

Wednesday's Woman

By Audrey J. Bernard

ESSENCE fête magnificent *Black Women in Hollywood*



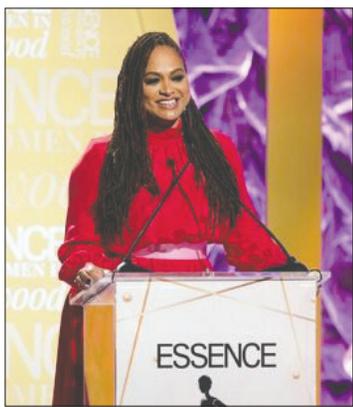
Host Eve



Honorees Angelica Ross, Lashana Lynch, Janet Mock, Niecy Nash, Hailie Sahar, MJ Rodriguez, and Melina Matsoukas pose onstage during the 13th Annual ESSENCE Black Women in Hollywood Award Luncheon



Honoree Hailie Sahar, Honoree Janet Mock, Honoree Angelica Ross, Billy Porter, Honoree MJ Rodriguez



Ava DuVernay



Essence CEO Michelle Ebanks, Essence Ventures Founder & Chairman Richelieu Dennis, Essence Chief Content & Creative Officer Moana Luu



Essence staff attend the 2020 13th Annual ESSENCE Black Women in Hollywood Luncheon at Beverly Wilshire, A Four Seasons Hotel on February 06, 2020 in Beverly Hills, California. (Photo by Leon Bennett/Getty Images for ESSENCE)

BEVERLY HILLS, CA – The star-studded 13th annual ESSENCE's *Black Women in Hollywood Awards* pre-Oscar luncheon was all that! The exclusive event, held Thursday, February 6, 2020 at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills, CA, was hosted by award-winning musician, actress and television personality, **Eve**. This year's theme, in honor of the brand's 50th anniversary, was a celebration of women owning, expanding and transforming the art of storytelling. The stellar soiree fêted actress **Lashana Lynch** (*Black Women In Hollywood Award Re-*

ipient); DGA nominated director and two-time Grammy Award-winning music video director **Melina Matsoukas** (*Black Women in Hollywood Award Recipient*); actress, comedian, director and producer **Niecy Nash** (*Ford Vanguard Award Recipient*); and the trailblazing cast and co-executive producer/

director/writer of *POSE* **Janet Mock**, **MJ Rodriguez**, **Indya Moore**, **Domonique Jackson**, **Angelica Ross** and **Hailie Sahar** (*Black Women In Hollywood Award Recipients*). Presenters included **Ava DuVernay**, **Billy Porter**, **Issa Rae**, **Kerry**

Washington and **Alfre Woodard**. Entertainment was provided by **Brittany Howard**, lead vocalist and guitarist for the chart-topping, Grammy Award-winning band Alabama Shakes who performed a medley of funk, soul ballads from

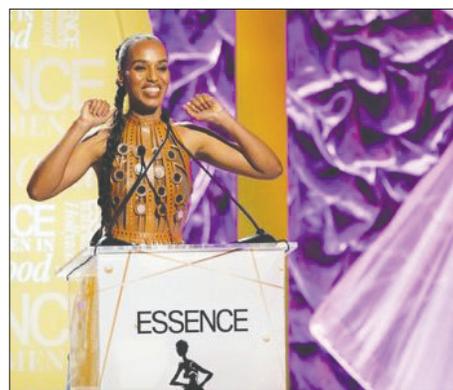
her solo album, *Jaime*. The excellent invite-only celebration was presented by **Ford** and sponsored by **AT&T Humanity of Connection**, **Coca-Cola**, **Geico**, **Hulu**, **L'Oréal Paris**, **McDonald's** and **Netflix**. (Photos by Getty Images)



Billy Porter



Issa Rae



Kerry Washington



Alfre Woodard



Brittany Howard performs onstage



Loretta Devine, Niecy Nash, Moana Luu, Loni Love, Attendee



Eva Marcille, Kandi Burruss, Garcelle Beauvais, Cynthia Bailey



Niecy Nash, Lena Waithe, Ava DuVernay

Blue Ivy Carter wins her first NAACP Image Award at 8-years-old



Philadelphiaobserver.com

At just eight-years-old Blue Ivy Carter can say she is an NAACP Image Award winner after "Brown Skin Girl" won the

award for Outstanding Duo, Group of Collaboration.

The song is a collaboration that saw Blue Ivy appear next to her mother Beyoncé, Saint JHN and Wizkid. "Brown Skin

Girl" was on The Lion King: The Gift album, which released in 2019.

According to Variety, the Carters were not in attendance but would rack up awards during the evening including Outstanding Variety (Series or Special) for Homecoming: A Film by Beyoncé, Outstanding Album for Homecoming: The Live Album, Outstanding Song – Traditional for "Spirit," Outstanding Song – Contemporary for "Before I Let Go," Outstanding Soundtrack/Compilation Album for The Lion King: The Gift, and Outstanding Female Artist.

The win for Blue Ivy was acknowledged by her grandmother Tina Knowles Lawson who celebrated online. "Congratulations BLUE IVY on your NAACP award last night for singing and writing on "Brown Skin Girl" from the Album The Gift." Lawson wrote. "The youngest artist to win a major award Grandma is so proud of you."

"Brown Skin Girl" didn't only give Blue Ivy Carter her first major award but also placed her on the Billboard Hot 100 for the first time when it made its debut at No. 76 back in July. The Lion King: The Gift album hit the charts peaking at No. 2.



White, Black people to get more room on 2020 census to explain their origins

Philadelphiaobserver.com

People who identify as "white" or "Black or African American" will have 16 blank spaces to explain their ethnic makeup when filling out the paper copy. Those filling out the form online will have 200 characters.

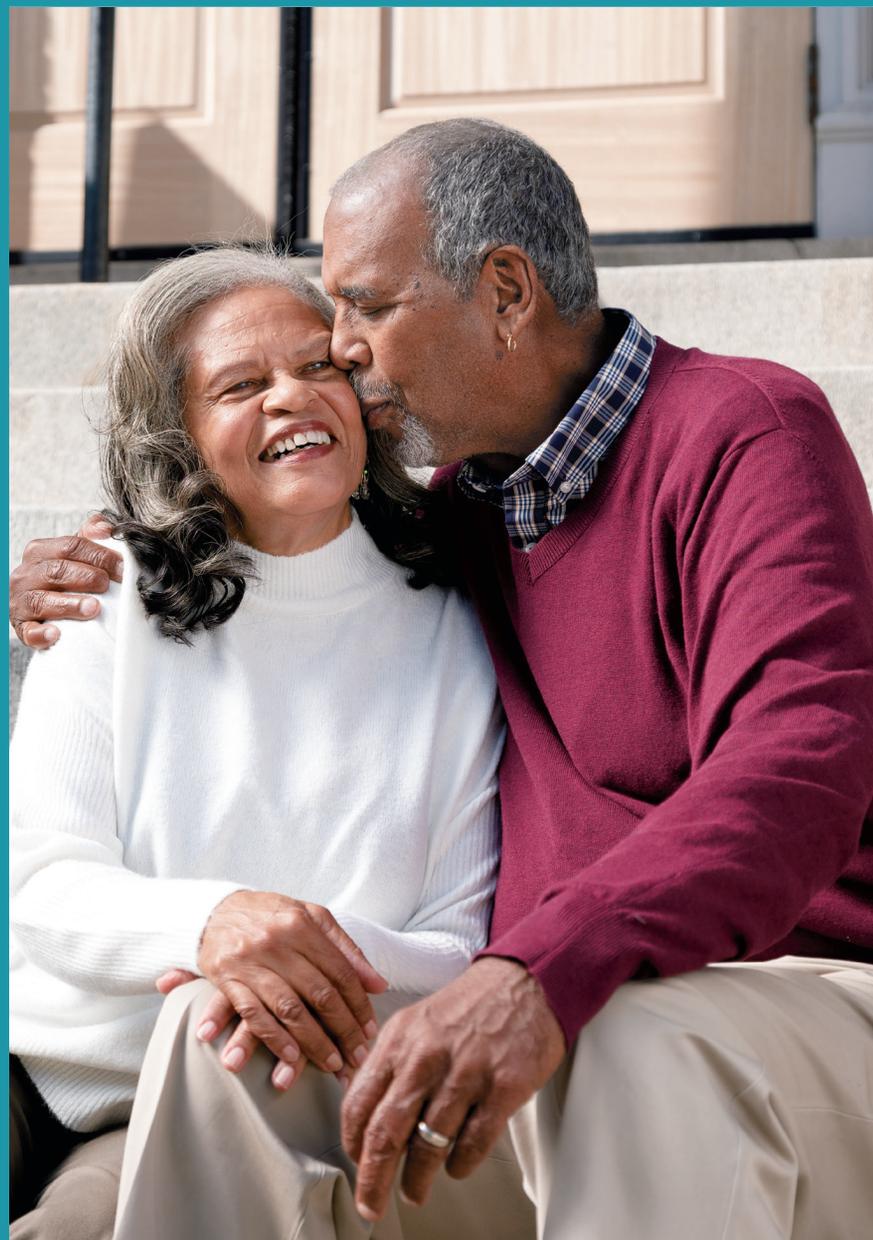
In previous decades, the option to elaborate has only been available to Native Americans, people of Hispanic or Latino origin, Pacific Islanders and those who identify as "some other race."

The change in the form aims to collect more detailed data and better reflect the country's changing demographics, such as the increasing number of African immigrants.

For decades, census data has been used to track newcomers' mobility over time.

D'Vera Cohn, a senior writer and editor with the Pew Research Center, has focused on the census since 1990. Giving Black and African American people more room to elaborate on their heritage, she said, "may help trace some of the differences in the immigrant experience versus the sort of longer term African American experience in the U.S."

"The census numbers give you strength," said Linda Berk, with the New York Regional Census Center, which includes New Jersey. "They give you support in showing that you are here, and you want services and to document that for them."



If it were up to me, we'd have all the healthcare we need.

The 2020 Census informs funding for walk-in clinics, Medicare and all types of health services. Rest assured your answers are safe and secure.

Learn more at:

2020CENSUS.GOV

Paid for by U.S. Census Bureau.

Shape
your future
START HERE >

United States®
Census
2020

Health

Big insurance must help end surprise medical billing

By Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.,
NNPA President/CEO

It is a serious financial problem that far too many African Americans – from impoverished individuals to working-class families – face these days in the bewilderingly complicated health-care market: Getting hit with an unexpected bill after a hospital stay or visit to the emergency room.

Known as “surprise medical billing,” these unexpected costs arise when a patient goes to a hospital for emergency or non-emergency care, only to find out afterwards that one of the medical providers who administered care was not covered in the patient’s insurance network.

This outrageous situation benefits one group and one group alone: powerful insurance executives, who have managed to get off the financial hook for such bills, even as insurers shrink insurance coverage networks to wring more and more profits out of the system.

But this predatory practice is overwhelming to a family already dealing with the emotional and financial burdens of a medical crisis, typically adding thousands of dollars in unexpected expenses that can wipe out savings accounts or otherwise strain tight household budgets.

So, what can be done to stop and end surprise medical billing?

The good news is that both Republicans and Democrats in Congress agree that legislation is needed to protect patients against unexpected medical charges. But as with many complicated issues

confronting Congress, lawmakers have been divided on the details of such legislation.

Part of the paralysis in Congress stems from confusion and disinformation, as insurance executives and their allies try to frame the debate to their advantage.

When Congress tried to address the issue last year, for example, the insurance lobbying machine swung into action, attempting to place the blame for surprise bills on out-of-network medical providers who end up having to charge patients when insurers refuse to cover a medical bill.

Big insurance almost got its way in that legislative debate when a handful of lawmakers threw support behind a legislative proposal that would shield insurance companies from paying what they ought to pay. The legislation, championed by Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), specifically called for setting benchmarked rates for out-of-network medical providers.

But far from solving the problem, this approach would make matters worse. It not only frees insurers from their responsibilities. It fails to compensate providers for the cost of the care that they actually provide. And that, in turn, means either patients will get stuck with the bill or medical providers will have to absorb big losses that ultimately jeopardize their ability to stay in business.

Fortunately, the proposed bill stalled after the medical community warned that the benchmarked rate favored by the insurance industry would allow insurers to

exert a new troubling level of control over health-care prices and the larger health-care delivery system.

Now, as Congress begins to take up the issue once again, health insurance companies that evaded significant scrutiny last year seem to be drawing close scrutiny now, both inside and outside of Washington.

Speaking to a group of faith leaders and policymakers in South Carolina, an important stop for the 2020 Democratic presidential primary, Reverend Al Sharpton criticized the surprise medical billing legislation backed by insurers and stressed the urgent need to deal with the continued lack of access to adequate health insurance coverage for minority communities.

“Washington is getting it wrong,” he wrote in an opinion piece published after his South Carolina trip, adding that the bill introduced by “Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) to ‘solve’ the surprise billing problem would literally insulate insurance companies from covering these costs, at a time when profits for insurance companies have reached record highs.”

In the U.S. House of Representatives, Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal (D-Ma.) predicted that health insurers would do little more than look out for their own interest if they were given the authority to set rates for out-of-network providers.

“My concern with giving too much weight to such a benchmark rate is that we already know insurers are looking for any way they can to pay the least amount pos-



sible,” he said. “They will work to push those rates down, regardless of what it means for community providers like physicians, hospitals, and our constituents who they employ.”

There were similar concerns in the U.S. Senate, where Senator Bill Cassidy (R-La.) warned that insurers began gaming the system in California once benchmarking rates became the law of the land in that state in 2016.

“Insurance companies cancel contracts and then they have the negotiating power and they establish” their own rate, he said, adding that such benchmarking of rates would likely put hospitals “out of business.”

It’s worth noting that lawmakers are raising such concerns despite the considerable backing the insurance-industry legislation has had from two powerful lawmakers: Senator Alexander, chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; and Frank Pallone, the chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, whose jurisdiction includes health care issues.

More than that, Senator Cassidy introduced legislation that would eliminate surprise medical billing by establishing an arbitration system between insurers and

providers — rather than sticking the disputed medical charges to patients. And that legislation is gaining strong bipartisan support, as is a similar bill in the House that is being advanced Representative Phil Roe (R-Tenn.) and Representative Raul Ruiz (D-Calif.), both of whom are doctors.

Surprise medical billing is a problem we can no longer ignore, particularly at a time when roughly two-thirds of Americans say that they are concerned about their ability to pay for an unexpected medical expense for themselves or for a family member. And this practice it is especially hard on African Americans and other people of color in the U.S. who already face significant barriers to health care and who generally receive lower quality of care than the rest of the nation.

Congress has an opportunity to make things right by ending the practice of surprise medical billing. Black Americans and all others in America shouldn’t be saddled with exorbitant bills that they had no reason to expect – and that impose an unjust financial burden.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. is President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) and can be reached at dr.bchavis@nnpa.org

Outgoing Mississippi governor says state faces ‘1,000 years of darkness’ if Black man elected

From page 3

— white, black, Democrat, persuadable Republican, persuadable moderates and those in the middle,” Espy told the AP in November 2019.

“But I know where they are now. I’m not flying blind.” During his first campaign against Hyde-Smith, a video surfaced showing her praising a supporter by saying she’d attend a “public hanging” if he invited her.

Bryant rekindled those sentiments with his tweet, setting social media ablaze with anger.

Many pointed out the state’s history of racism and recent and ongoing problems at Parchman Prison, a former plantation that housed hundreds of slaves and whose population includes more than 60 percent Blacks; the state’s debtor’s prison that punishes mostly African Americans; and a recent state Supreme Court de-

cision to affirm a 12-year prison sentence for a Black man who turned over a cell phone to a corrections officer.

“Darkness follows Mississippi Gov Phil Bryant around,” feminist Paula Cain wrote on Twitter. “Every time that old white man opens his racist, uneducated mouth — darkness flows out.”

Sharon Raynor, a retired military officer, agreed with Cain. “The Mississippi governor is still living in the Jim Crow era,” Raynor stated.

Alvon Phillips, a medical technician, said the comments are in line with what the state represents.

“Anyone can clearly see how racist and prejudiced this Mississippi governor is and what race of people he truly represents; the only race whose interest he cares to advance,” Phillips stated. “Now, you can understand why Mississippi is last in everything. Last in education, wages, and development.”

Journalist Joe Jurado analyzed Bryant’s comments in a January 9 article for *The Root*.

“Mississippi has a very long and very violent history of racism: 600 black people were lynched between 1877 to 1950, the most of any state,” Jurado recalled.

“Up until 2017, the state still had predominately segregated schools. This makes it all the more surprising than the governor believes Mike Espy being elected to the Senate would open the doors of Guf and bring about the fourth impact,” Jurado stated.

“We’re talking about the same man who, after Hyde-Smith came under fire for her lynching comments, went on a podium and compared Black women getting abortions to genocide. Hyperbolic racism just seems to be this dude’s go-to.”

In a June 1964 profile, *The New York Times* called Mississippi “the most segregated state, and noted

that, “Through most of the state’s history, the White supremacists have been able to control government at the local and state levels.”

A 2019 lawsuit filed by three Black residents challenged Mississippi’s requirement that candidates running for statewide office must win both a majority of the popular vote and at least 62 of 122 state House of Representatives districts.

The law, which was put into place in 1890 when White politicians openly sought to suppress the Black vote, states that no candidate fulfills both requirements, the House then decides a statewide election, and representatives aren’t required to vote along with their districts.

“This racist electoral scheme achieved, and continues to achieve, the framers’ goals by tying the statewide election process to the power structure of the House,” the plaintiffs stated in the

lawsuit.

“So long as white Mississippians controlled the House, they would also control the elections of statewide officials.”

In an op-ed about Mississippi for *The Atlantic* late last year, Jesmyn Ward, an author who teaches creative writing at Tulane University, said racism makes itself known very vocal and confrontational ways.

“But perhaps the most tragic manifestation of racist sentiment in Mississippi is silent. Built into the very bones of this place. My state starves its people and, in doing so, actively resists Dr. Martin Luther King’s legacy,” Ward stated.

“Our Republican lawmakers have made an effort to undercut programs that serve the poor, maybe because so many people of color in Mississippi live in poverty and depend on social programs for help.”

Murder charge facing Lesotho Prime Minister faces constitutional review

(GIN) –

Murder charges against the Prime Minister of Lesotho, Thomas Thabane, will be reconsidered in light of a novel appeal for immunity to be heard by the country's High Court.

If his appeal is rejected, Mr. Thabane would be the first African leader to face domestic murder charges while in office.

Mr. Thabane, 80 years of age, appeared this week in the public gallery of the court in Maseru, the nation's capital, with his present spouse who has been charged with the murder of his previous wife. Maesaiah Thabane, 42, has not yet entered a plea and is out on bail. Both have denied any wrongdoing.

According to local reports, Lipelele Thabane, 58, was shot several times at close range as she sat in a car near her home, two days before husband's inauguration in 2017. She had reportedly refused a divorce and won a court battle to retain her privileges as first lady until any formal separation.

Mr. Thabane remarried two months after her death.

Presidential spokesman Thabo Thakalekoala said: "The prime



minister is protected by the constitution although he is not above the law. This whole exercise is just meant to embarrass him and nothing else."

Thabane has said he will resign at the end of July, and several members of his All Basotho Convention party have been urging him to go sooner.

The killing was initially blamed on unknown criminals. Investigators now say they believe professional hitmen, possibly hired in South Africa, carried out the attack.

Maesaiah has been a controversial figure. Since the wedding she has been accused of interfering in political appointments. A

fund she set up to help reduce poverty has been the focus of allegations of fraud and money laundering. She denies any wrongdoing.

The affair has been followed closely in South Africa, which surrounds Lesotho and has intervened before to maintain stability. In 2014, Thabane claimed that a coup was being launched against him. He fled to South Africa but was soon returned to Lesotho by South African police.

Last month South Africa's finance minister, Tito Mboweni, suggested Lesotho could become part of his country under a federal arrangement.



How Hindu supremacists are tearing India apart

Philadelphiaobserver.com

For seven decades, India has been held together by its constitution, which promises equality to all. But Narendra Modi's BJP is remaking the nation into one where some people count as more Indian than others. By Samantha Subramanian

Soon after the violence began, on 5 January, Aamir was standing outside a residence hall in Jawaharlal Nehru University in south Delhi. Aamir, a PhD student, is Muslim, and he asked to be identified only by his first name. He had come to return a book to a classmate when he saw 50 or 60 people approaching the building. They carried metal rods, cricket bats and rocks. One swung a sledgehammer. They were yelling slogans: "Shoot the traitors to the nation!" was a common one. Later, Aamir learned that they had spent the previous half-hour assaulting a gathering of teachers and students down the road. Their faces were masked, but some were still

recognisable as members of a Hindu nationalist student group that has become increasingly powerful over the past few years.

The group, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidya Parishad (ABVP), is the youth wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Founded 94 years ago by men who were besotted with Mussolini's fascists, the RSS is the holding company of Hindu supremacism: of Hindutva, as it's called. Given its role and its size, it is difficult to find an analogue for the RSS anywhere in the world. In nearly every faith, the source of conservative theology is its hierarchical, centrally organised clergy; that theology is recast into a project of religious statecraft elsewhere, by other parties. Hinduism, though, has no principal church, no single pontiff, nobody to ordain or rule. The RSS has appointed itself as both the arbiter of theological meaning and the architect of a Hindu nation-state. It has at least 4 million volunteers, who swear oaths of allegiance and take part in quasi-military drills.

Over half of UK women killed by men die at hands of partner or ex

Philadelphiaobserver.com

More than half the women killed by men in the UK in 2018 were killed by a current or former partner, many after they had taken steps to leave, according to a report on femicide.

The fourth Femicide Census, conducted by the campaigner Karen Ingala Smith, found 149 women were killed by 147 men in 2018. The number of deaths is an increase of 10 on the previous year and the highest number since the census began.

Of the deceased women, 91 (61%) were killed by a current or former partner. Only 6% of murders were committed by a stranger.

Of the 58 women not killed by current or former partners, 12 were killed by their sons or stepsons, while five were killed by a son-in-law or former son-in-law.



In half the cases, perpetrators had previous histories of violence against the victim or other women, with three men found to have killed before. One had been convicted of manslaughter in 1996 and jailed for three years. The second, who also had a history of stalking, had been released from prison in 2014 after murdering his previous partner in 1999. The third

had been convicted of culpable homicide in 1992 and had also been convicted of serious violent offences in 2001 and 2010.

The most common method of murder was a sharp instrument, with strangulation or asphyxiation the second most common. The majority of killings (68%) occurred either in or immediately around the woman's house.

Medieval 'Black death' mass grave uncovered in English countryside

Philadelphiaobserver.com

The sweeping scourge of the Black Death in 14th century England was so great it forced city-dwelling victims out to countryside hospitals, based on the tragic findings in a mass grave in Lincolnshire, England.

The remains of 48 people, including 21 children, were found at a previously unknown Black Death mass grave site at Thornton Abbey, according to a new study.

In less than two years, the Black Death claimed nearly half the lives of people in England between

1348 and 1349. Mass graves in England's large Medieval cities have shown how overwhelmed they were. But small rural communities weren't known to have these mass graves until now.

The 48 people in the mass grave were buried over a few days, but those at the medieval hospital attached to Thornton Abbey took the time to carefully wrap each person in a burial shroud and place them individually so they weren't overlapping.

The study detailing the findings of the mass grave published Tuesday in the journal *Antiquity*.



Subscribe Philadelphia Observer

405 Lexington Avenue,
26th Floor, New York, NY 10174

212-213-8585.

philadelphiaobserver.com

Culture

60 years ago—students launched a sit-in movement

From page 4

replaceable, minimum wage jobs, often with no dependents.

Drawing the contrast between student activists versus the older activists is not synonymous with drawing divisions, as the older activists understood the assets that students solely possessed to further the movement along. In fact, many of the older activists encouraged the younger activists and actively supported them in numerous ways.

For example, when Bennett College students, who were the heroines on the 1963 Greensboro protests, were arrested and refused bail during the 1963 sit-ins in Greensboro, their professors came to the jail facilities and gave them their classroom and homework assignments every week. This scenario personifies the symbiotic relationship between both generations in the fight against racism, as the professors showed their appreciation for the young people's unique and valiant position for the benefit of the entire race and future generations, yet not removing the students from their responsibilities and academic requirements.

Altogether, students endured countless hardships that included incarceration, verbal assaults and physical violence. Sometimes, attacks from white antagonists were compounded by disproportionate responses from law enforcement, as Portsmouth activist, Edward Rodman explained, "...the fire department, all of the police force and police dogs were mobilized. The police turned the dogs loose on the Negroes-but not all the whites."

Students also understood that they could pay the ultimate price for protesting against the status quo of racial inequality, as numerous activists were murdered throughout the Civil Rights era. Nevertheless, over 50,000 black students and sympathizers par-

ticipated in the sit-ins of 1960. As historian Clayborne Carson highlighted, "Nonviolent tactics, particularly when accompanied by rationale based on Christian principles, offered black students...a sense of moral superiority, an emotional release through militancy, and a possibility of achieving desegregation."

A movement within a movement was born on February 1, 1960 and that movement evolved into its own distinct force by the middle of the decade. Soon after the sit-ins began, students realized their collective prowess, as student activism consistently helped define the decade of the 60s in forcing monumental political, legal and social changes throughout the nation.

Finally, the black student activists of the 1960 sit-ins did three important things, albeit unintentional: they helped lay the foundation for all collective student activism in the 60s and beyond, they played a legendary role in the larger African-American Freedom Movement that began as early as Africans' arrival to colonial America, and they cemented a valuable place in one of America's most significant traditions, the protest tradition, which has continuously defined and propelled our country since its inception.

Our society, and all post-1960 social movements, have undeniably benefited from the audacity of those four brave freshmen and their actions on February 1, 1960.

Dr. Kelton Edmonds is a Professor of History at California University of Pennsylvania. His primary research is on Black Student Activism in the United States. He is a native of Portsmouth, VA and graduated from I.C. Norcom High school in 1993. He holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in Secondary Education-History from North Carolina A&T State University. He earned his Ph.D. in 20th Century US History from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Rihanna talks Allyship at 2020 NAACP Image Awards: 'Tell your friends to pull up'

Philadelphiaobserver.com

Rihanna accepted the President's Award at the 51st NAACP Image Awards on Saturday.

The singer was celebrated for her career in music and fashion, and her philanthropy, including her Clara Lionel Foundation, which aims to support and fund "education, health and emergency response programs around the world."

"If there's anything that I've

learned [it's] that we can only fix this world together," Rihanna said in her acceptance speech.

She spoke about the importance of allyship, asking audience members to raise their hands if they have "colleagues and partners and friends from other races, sexes, religions."

"They want to break bread with you, right?" she asked. "They like you? Well, then, this is their problem too."

"When we're marching and protesting and posting about the Mi-



chael Brown Jr. and the Atatiana Jeffersons of the world, tell your friends to pull up," she added.

Lizzo named Entertainer of the Year at 2020 NAACP Image Awards

During her acceptance speech on stage, the "Cuz I Love You" singer celebrated meeting all of her "heroes" at the award show, including Angela Bassett, who was also nominated for the honor this year.

"It says that I'm the Entertainer of the Year but you are the entertainer period!" the singer said about the "9-1-1" actor.

Lizzo later continued, calling attention to her efforts to spread body positivity through her music and performances.

"I just want to shout out all of the big Black girls that I bring on stage with me," she said. "I do that because I want them to know that they are the trophies."



3 more states pass laws ending black hair discrimination a/k/a the Crown Act

Philadelphiaobserver.com

CNN reported that in just one week, three states introduced or advanced bills that would ban hair discrimination as part of a national effort known as the CROWN Act, which stands for "Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair." The CROWN Act seeks to ensure protection against discrimination based on hair texture and protective styles.

The Colorado state House passed the CROWN Act on Wednesday, and the state Senate introduced the bill on Thursday.

The Washington state House passed a bill on the same Thursday that would prohibit employers and schools from discriminating against people over hairstyles and textures including afros, braids, locks and twists. The bill was introduced in the state Senate on Friday.

In Minnesota, a bill introduced similar legislation earlier in the week.

You may remember that just a couple weeks ago director Matthew A. Cherry won an Oscar for the short film Hair Love, a story about a black father trying to do his daughter's hair. Cherry, along with producers Gabrielle Union and Dwayne Wade, invited Arnold to the ceremony and, during his acceptance speech, Cherry pushed for the CROWN Act to be passed everywhere in the country.

"Hair Love' was done because we wanted to see more representation in animation, we wanted to normalize black hair and there's a very important issue out there, the CROWN Act. If we can help get this passed in all 50 states it will help stories like Deandre Arnold's ... stop to happen," Cherry said. An now that may very well be on its way to happening.

CROWN Act has already been made law in California, New York and New Jersey. And at least 22 states are following suit by considering the legislation, while



local jurisdictions like Cincinnati, Ohio, and Montgomery County, Maryland, have already passed it as well.

And finally, because we all got to come to glory sooner or later, this week Texas lawmakers said they would consider passing the act or something similar too. Members of the state's Legislative Black Caucus announced this week that they were working on a bill for the 2021 legislative session. This came, of course, after Arnold's story broke and spread.

Subscribe
Philadelphia
Observer

405 Lexington Avenue,
26th Floor, New York, NY 10174
212-213-8585.
philadelphiaobserver.com

August Wilson African American Cultural Center to showcase his iconic body of work

Posted by:
Audrey J. Bernard

One of the greatest playwrights of all-time is indisputably **August Wilson**. In appreciation of the important impact his work has contributed to our culture, the **August Wilson African American Cultural Center (AWAACC)**, one of the largest non-profit cultural organizations in the country focused exclusively on the African American experience and the arts of the African Diaspora, will create *August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape*, the first-ever exhibition dedicated to the life and works of the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright. Opening in late fall 2020, the 1,800 square foot permanent exhibition will explore the people and places of Pittsburgh, where Wilson was born and raised, and which had a profound impact on shaping his worldview and inspiring his unprecedented 10-play *American Century Cycle*.

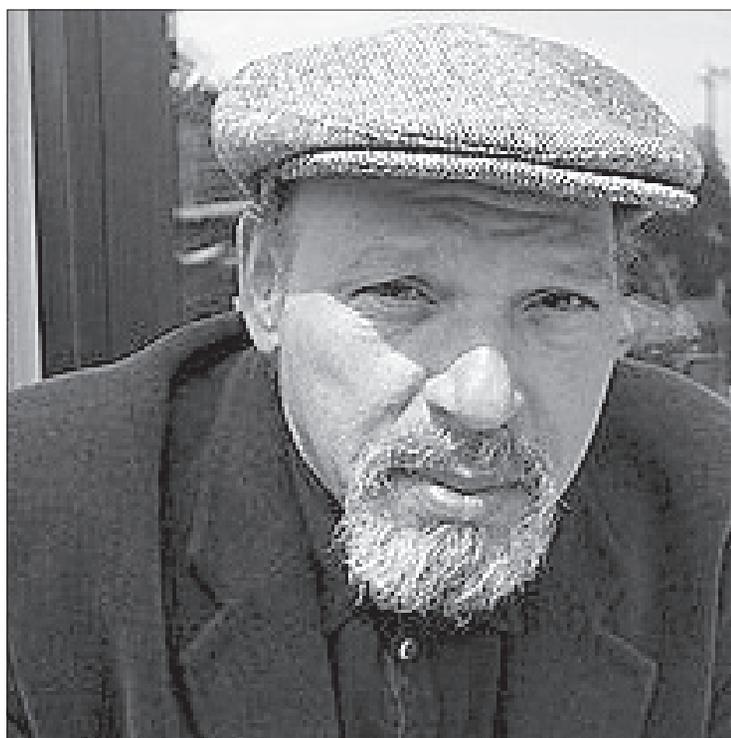
AWAACC provides a platform for established and emerging artists of color whose work reflects the universal issues of identity that Wilson tackled and which still resonates today, and the organization's leadership had been considering how best to spotlight the playwright and his work since taking over two years ago. Presented in three sections, or acts, *August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape* will showcase the universal themes the prolific playwright tackled and the enduring relevance of his work through reproductions and artifacts from Wilson's life and notable productions of his work; elements that invite patrons to address the issues of race, representation, family, and community; and interactive digital components that showcase each play in the *American Century Cycle*.

Developed in partnership with **Constanza Romero Wilson**, Wilson's widow and executor of the August Wilson Estate, and longtime Wilson collaborator and Tony Award-winning scenic designer **David Gallo**, the Center is working with leading design firms, scholars, and local artists to create the exhibition. *August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape*, which will be **free** of charge and open daily, expands the non-profit organization's mission to offer programs and resources that advance Wilson's legacy, celebrate Black culture, and champion future innovators in arts and culture.

Leading design firm Eisterhold Associates Inc., whose work includes the Rosa Parks Museum in Alabama, the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum in Missouri, and the African American Museum in Philadelphia, will fabricate the exhibition, with support from Deeplocal, a Pittsburgh-based technical design firm. Generous support for *August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape* is provided by Allegheny Regional Asset District and the Hillman Foundation. In addition, the Center is collaborating with



August Wilson African American Cultural Center is located on the corner of Liberty Avenue and 10th Street, in the Cultural District of Downtown Pittsburgh.



Beloved Pulitzer Prize-Winning Playwright August Wilson

Dr. Sandra Shannon, Professor of African American Literature at Howard University and a Wilson scholar, as well as local historians to recreate the historic Hill District and provide vital information to demonstrate the many changes that the community has endured.

"In the past two years the Center has seen a remarkable period of growth. It has long been our goal to create a permanent exhibition that celebrates the life of August Wilson, the Pittsburgh community that inspired him, and the ways in which his work and the issues he tackled continues to speak to audiences around the globe," said **Janis Burley Wilson**, President and CEO of AWAACC. "A *Writer's Land-*

scape will extend his legacy even further and allow all who come to the Center to immerse themselves in his world and his art. I'm incredibly grateful to Constanza Romero Wilson for being an integral collaborator and partner, and to the Allegheny Regional Asset District and Hillman Foundation for their support in making this vision a reality."

"It is my honor to work with Janis Burley Wilson and the August Wilson African American Cultural Center, to educate and enlighten visitors about the life and work of my late husband, playwright August Wilson," said **Constanza Romero Wilson**. "While his roots were firmly planted in the culture and history of Pittsburgh's historic Hill District,

the humanity of his characters and the universality of his stories about love, honor, duty, and betrayal are still making an international impact today. With this permanent exhibit we hope to secure his legacy for many generations to come."

Born and raised in Pittsburgh's Hill District, Wilson drew his greatest inspiration from the city and its people. Many of his works in the *American Century Cycle*, which almost exclusively take place in Pittsburgh and represent each decade of the 1900s, were largely informed by Wilson's observations of the environment that surrounded him.

To bring Wilson's story to life, *August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape* will guide visitors through three sections, or acts:

The Coffee Shop: Inspired by Eddie's, a local eatery in the Hill District, where a young Wilson frequently went to observe the day-to-day interactions of its diners. He scrawled notes on napkins, which subsequently provided the basis for many of his characters and the inspiration for his storytelling;

The Office: a replica of Wilson's home office that will showcase his working environment and items that he prized, including his writing desk, manuscripts, books and records from his collection, generously donated by the Wilson Estate;

The Street: A symbolic walk through Wilson's *American Century Cycle*, "The Street" will feature a section dedicated to each of Wilson's 10 plays, utilizing video, props, and costumes from notable Broadway productions of his work; and will provide insights on the decades they are set in and events that took place in

Pittsburgh and across the nation at those times. To illustrate the universality of his plays, this section will show all current and scheduled productions of his plays across the globe and invite visitors to share how Wilson has been a creative inspiration to them, highlighting how the issues and people he wrote about more than four decades ago continue to be timeless and relevant today.

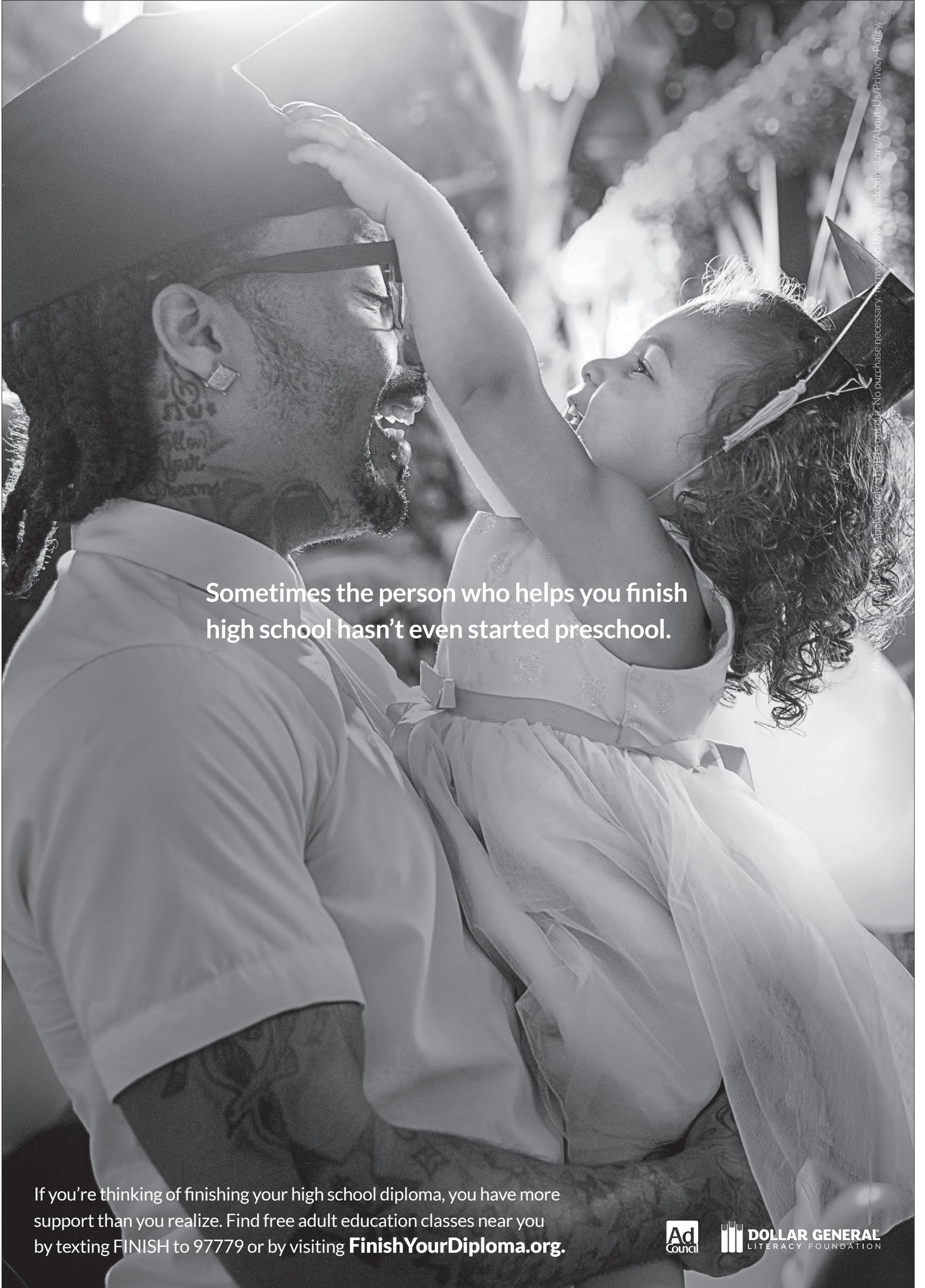
"The August Wilson African American Cultural Center plays a vital role in our region's cultural landscape and RAD is proud to support this permanent exhibition with a RADical ImPact Grant," said **Daniel J. Griffin**, Chairman of the Board of the Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD). "These special, one-time grants were created in celebration of RAD's 25th anniversary and were awarded to 12 projects that will inspire our region for the next 25 years. A *Writer's Landscape* will do just that, honoring the legacy and tenacity of one of our most celebrated artists, and inspiring a new generation through his work and history."

"August Wilson's legacy is so much a part of Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh is so much a part of his work," said **David K. Roger**, President of the Hillman Foundation. "We are pleased to support the August Wilson African American Cultural Center in designing this important exhibition that will highlight his imprint on literature and drama that is now celebrated around the world."

To learn more about the August Wilson African American Cultural Center, its year-round activities, and *August Wilson: A Writer's Landscape*, please visit <https://aacc-awc.org/>.

About August Wilson African American Cultural Center

The August Wilson African American Cultural Center is a non-profit multidisciplinary arts center located in Pittsburgh's cultural district that generates artistic, educational, and community initiatives that advance the legacy of Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson. One of the largest cultural centers in the country focused exclusively on the African American experience and the celebration of Black culture and the African Diaspora, the non-profit organization welcomes more than 80,000 visitors locally and nationally. Through year-round programming such as the annual Pittsburgh International Jazz Festival, Black Bottom Film Festival, AWCommunity Days, TRUTHSayers speaker series, and rotating art exhibits in its two galleries, the Center provides a platform for established and emerging artists of color whose work reflects the universal issues of identity that Wilson tackled and which still resonates today.



Sometimes the person who helps you finish high school hasn't even started preschool.

Message by Ad Council. Apply. Reply. Stay. Be. our. No purchase necessary. Terms and Privacy: adcotincil.org/About-Us/Privacy-Policy.

If you're thinking of finishing your high school diploma, you have more support than you realize. Find free adult education classes near you by texting FINISH to 97779 or by visiting FinishYourDiploma.org.





From the desk of
MIKE BLOOMBERG

Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking the time to learn about The Greenwood Initiative.

As someone who has been very lucky in life, I often say my story would only have been possible in America – and that’s true. But I also know that because of the artificial barriers of discrimination, my story likely would have turned out very differently if I had been Black, and that more Black Americans of my generation would have ended up with far more wealth, had they been white.

Building Generational Wealth for Black Families is Critical. That’s why I launched The Greenwood Initiative in Tulsa last month. I visited the site of the Black Wall Street Massacre, where a white mob decimated the prosperous community of Greenwood. It is to the memory of the lost lives and promise of Greenwood that we’ve dedicated The Greenwood Initiative: a plan to address the systematic bias that has kept Black Americans from building wealth.

THE GREENWOOD PLAN WILL:

- Create 1 million new Black homeowners
- Double the number of new Black-owned businesses
- Invest \$70 billion in the country’s 100 most disadvantaged neighborhoods

Fixing the System for Black Families. When I was mayor of New York, I was proud to take on the systematic inequality that held back too many New Yorkers. *We increased education funding, built 650 new schools and raised Black graduation rates to record highs.* We led an ambitious effort to reduce poverty and managed the largest amount of affordable housing in the nation. And as President, I will work even more aggressively to combat inequality nationwide.

I understand that undoing generations of systematic discrimination won’t happen overnight, but we can make progress with a clear vision and a comprehensive plan. I’ve included a pamphlet along with this letter that lays out my plan. When I’m President, implementing The Greenwood Initiative will be a top priority.

Join me in ending the systemic inequality that has held Black Americans back for too long!

Sincerely,


 Mike Bloomberg

mike
 BLOOMBERG
 2020

THE
GREENWOOD
INITIATIVE

PAID FOR BY MIKE BLOOMBERG 2020



For more information visit

MikeForBlackAmerica.com