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Vol. 29 • No. 31 | August 4 – August 10, 2022

SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS TO GUN VIOLENCE CONTINUES

CONGRESS HOLDS HEARINGS WITH GUN MANUFACTURERS TO EXAMINE THEIR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN AMERICA'S GUN VIOLENCE CRISIS.

Congress passes ban on semi-automatic firearms. Bill H.R. 1808 will need Senate votes next.

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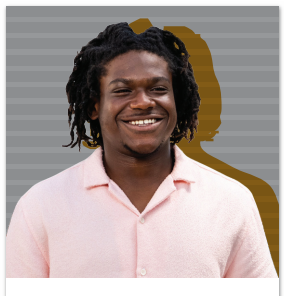

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As gun violence rises, congressional committee plans hearing with gun manufacturers

Biden's Fiscal Year 2023 budget proposes $32 billion in additional funding to fight crime, including $20.6 billion in discretionary funding for federal law enforcement and state and local law enforcement and crime prevention programs, an increase of 11 percent over FY22 enacted ($18.6 billion) and 18 percent over FY21 enacted ($17.5 billion).

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire

The Biden Administration promised to continue to use "all of the tools at its disposal" to address the epidemic of gun violence. (Pictured: Rep. Carolyn Maloney [D-NY])

A congressional oversight committee has planned a hearing to examine the role of the firearms industry in America's gun violence epidemic.

Hosted by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.), the July 27 hearing also will seek steps Congress can take to hold manufacturers accountable.

In June, President Joe Biden celebrated the passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which he called the most significant gun violence reduction legislation to pass Congress in 30 years.

"Make no mistake about it, this legislation is real progress, but more has to be done," Biden declared.

The bill enhances background checks for gun buyers under 21, provides billions of dollars for mental health services, and gives $750 million to states to incentivize crisis intervention programs.

It also ensures that individuals convicted of domestic violence can't buy a weapon for at least five years.

After most mass shootings, social media fills up with posts about thoughts and prayers from lawmakers and others.

Biden appeared to recognize that in his speech Monday.

"Will we match thoughts and prayers with action? I say yes, and that's what we're doing here today," Biden declared.

The Biden Administration promised to continue to use "all of the tools at its disposal" to address the epidemic of gun violence.

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"With more than 300 mass shootings in the United States so far this year, and gun violence now the leading cause of death of children in America, it is clear that we are in a public health epidemic," Maloney stated.

On May 26, following the mass shootings in Uval-

Continued on page 5

Airbnb catches heat over former slave cabins being advertised as rentals

Philadelphiaobserver.com

Airbnb has grown exponentially since first launching back in the late-2000s as a literal air mattress in the founders' living room, now operating as a global entity that's become preferred over hotel stays and the traditional bed and breakfast. Well, for the most part anyway.

The popular lodging service has come under major scrutiny recently after a handful of listings proudly boasted about being built on the grounds of former slave cabins.

"This is not okay," exclaimed civil rights attorney Wynton Yates, who posted the original video on TikTok) that shed light on the listings in the first place. He called out a rental advertised as "The Panther Burn Cabin at Belmont Plantation" in Greenville, Mississippi, which aside from on the outside actually looking like an outhouse where slaves were once forced to live in also blatantly stated it in the description. Yates went on to also call out those who left reviews after staying a few nights — most, if not all, white people — and used words like "memorable," "elegant" and "delightful" to describe the lodging. As Yates put it, "How is this okay in somebody's mind to rent this out, a place where human beings were kept as slaves?"

More below on what Yates told Mic regarding his startling discovery:

"'We are taking this report seriously and have deactivated all listings associated with this property as we investigate,' an Airbnb spokesperson said in an email to Mic. Mic reached out to Belmont Plantation for comment as well,, but did not receive an immediate response.

Yates tells me his brother first saw the listing and sent it to a family group chat. His first thought when he saw the picture was that it couldn't be real; when he looked it up on Airbnb, he was flabbergasted to see that it was. 'Growing up, [my family] would take my siblings and my cousins and I and put slave shackles in our hands so that we could feel the weight of the steel that was put on our ancestors' bodies to contain them,' Yates says. 'To see someone just blatantly make a mockery out of it just didn't sit right with me.'"

Scholars, experts make case to expand Supreme Court, abolish electoral college

— A growing number of Americans reportedly believe that expanding the court and ridding elections of the Electoral College are keys to preserving democracy in America. This month, a bipartisan group of federal lawmakers led by Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) introduced the Electoral Count Reform Act of 2022 (ECRA) to ensure that electoral votes tallied by Congress accurately reflect each state's public vote for president.

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire

The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe v. Wade has raised concerns from women regarding bodily autonomy and palpable fear that other long-held rights may also be in jeopardy.

And with the ongoing hearings surrounding the January 6 insurrection and the attempt by former President Donald Trump to change the outcome of the 2020 election, momentum has increased in favor of abolishing the long-standing Electoral College.

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This month, a bipartisan group of federal lawmakers led by Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) introduced the Electoral Count Reform Act of 2022 (ECRA) to ensure that electoral votes tallied by Congress accurately reflect each state's public vote for president.

"Adding more justices to Supreme Court and abolishing the Electoral College both help to give the majority of Americans the ability to have a say in what's going on in their country," said H.R. Bellicosa, the author of The Punishings, a novel about a world without abortion rights.

"We are headed toward minority rule if we're not there already. Overturning Roe is a deeply unpopular opinion, but with a conservative majority on the court, the justices were able to further their theocratic agenda," Bellicosa stated.

"More justices would combat that. The Electoral College has given us two recent presidents who did not win the popular vote – [George W. Bush and Trump]. America is under threat of being ruled by a deeply unpopular minority, and steps must be taken to mitigate that."

A change.org petition has garnered more than 103,000 signatures from individuals desiring to abolish the Electoral College, a system established in the 1800s and resulted in the infamous "three-fifths compromise" in which three-fifths of an enslaved Black person would count toward allocating electors and representatives.

The U.S. Constitution holds that whoever wins the electoral vote claims the presidency during presidential elections even if the candidate fails to win the popular vote.

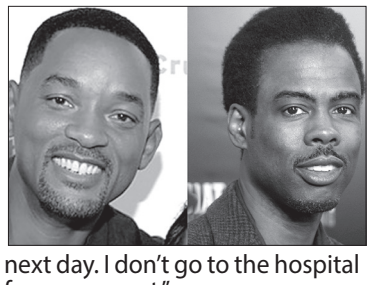
Further, historians noted that officials created the Electoral College to give slave states more power and to keep an agent of England's King George from becoming president.

Neither situation rises as per-

Continued on page 5

Will Smith issues apology to Chris Rock, family for Oscars slap

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire



Will Smith said he was "fogged out" and that he's finally reached out to Chris Rock to formally apologize for the infamous March 27 Oscars slap.

"It's all fuzzy," Smith said in an Instagram video posted on July 29.

"I've reached out to Chris and the message that came back is that he's not ready to talk. And when he is, he will reach out."

While Rock presented the Oscar for best documentary at the 2022 Academy Awards ceremony, Smith took exception to the comedian's comments about wife Jada Pinkett Smith's shaved head. Pinkett Smith had revealed she has alopecia.

After some uncomfortable laughter, Smith emerged from his seat, approached Rock during the live telecast, and slapped the star.

"Keep my wife's name out of your [bleeping] mouth," Smith yelled out at Rock.

"Anyone who says words hurt has never been punched in the face," Rock said during a standup a day before Smith's Instagram video surfaced.

It was the first time that Rock had directly addressed the incident.

"I'm not a victim. Yeah, that s— hurt," Rock remarked. "But I shook that s— off and went to work the next day. I don't go to the hospital for a paper cut."

In Smith's new video, he also apologized to Rock's mother and brother Tony Rock.

"That was one of the things about the moment. I just didn't realize," Smith recounted.

"I was thinking about how many people got hurt in that moment. I want to apologize to Chris' mother," he continued. "I want to apologize to Chris' family, specifically Tony Rock. We had a great relationship. You know, Tony Rock was my man, and this is probably irreparable."

Smith also refused to lay any blame on his wife.

"I made a choice on my own, from my own experiences from my history with Chris," Smith stated. "Jada had nothing to do [with it].

He also noted how his actions detracted from his best actor win and other nominees and winners.

"It really breaks my heart to have stolen and tarnished your moment," Smith asserted.

"Sorry isn't really sufficient. But I promise you, I am deeply devoted and committed to putting light and love and joy into the world. And if you hang on, I promise we'll be able to be friends again."

11-year-old entrepreneur scores full-ride scholarship at HBCU Golf Classic

Philadelphiaobserver.com

Florida Memorial University, an HBCU based in Miami Gardens, Florida, has granted an 11-year-old business owner named Carter Bonas a full-ride scholarship to its institution.

This game-changing scholarship was presented to Bonas at the South Florida HBCU Golf Classic, which went down this past Saturday at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort in Naples, Florida.

"I was awarded a [4-year] scholarship to attend college! See you in 6 years (or less) to get that business degree to take Spectrum Golf to the next level," Bonas wrote beneath a video of his award, proclaiming that he wants to earn a degree that'll help further his business.

15-year-old who struggled with autism is youngest person to graduate from Sam Houston State University

Philadelphiaobserver.com

A teenage Black boy is set to make history at one of the state universities in Houston. This fall, he will be the youngest person to earn a degree from that school.

Fifteen-year-old Nehemiah Juniel will be the youngest person to ever graduate from

Sam Houston State University

. The young scholar will receive his bachelor's degree in health science from the institution on Saturday, Aug. 6, and while the road has been very long (most people spend 16 years to complete K-12 and undergraduate education), it has not been without sacrifice.

While most kids were playing kickball, he was figuring out complicated math equations and reading books. According to The Huntsville Item, he was knocking out pre-algebra at the age of 5 and received his associate of science degree by 13.

One of six siblings, he and his sister Gabrielle were homeschooled by his parents. His 19-year-old sister is scheduled to graduate also from SHSU this fall.

Nehemiah Juniel: Credit: SHSU

7-year-old found dead inside washing machine in Texas

Philadelphiaobserver.com

Seven-year-old Troy Khoeler was found deceased inside of a washing machine in Spring, Texas on July 28, according to KHOU 11. The little boy had been reported missing by his parents in the early morning hours.

According to the Harris County Sheriff's Office Homicide Unit, the boy's adoptive parents had reported Khoeler missing at approximately 5:20 a.m. from their home on the 4400 block of Rosegate Drive.

Officers arrived at the home to file a missing person's report and were conducting a search of the home when they found the boy fully clothed inside of a washing machine in the home's garage at around 7:20 a.m. Lt. Robert Minchew said that the police did not yet know how the boy ended up inside of the washing machine.

"We don't know what happened, but we intend to find out," said Minchew. "Whether he was killed by the washing machine or killed and placed in it, we're just so far from that. I can't comment."

Khoeler's father, Jermaine Thomas, told the authorities that he'd returned home around 11:45 p.m. on July 27 to find the front door unlocked and his son missing.

"It's just that I came home, I was fixin' to walk in the door like right now," he said. "I don't have my keys but I put my keys to the door handle and then it just open. Anything else after that, I don't know."

Thomas and his wife were questioned separately at the police station but no arrests were made. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services claimed that the family does have a history with Child Protective Services but did not elaborate. "CPS does have history with the family

Dillard's department store fires employee caught in viral video calling Black man 'F—ing N—'

Philadelphiaobserver.com

A Black shopper in North Texas gracefully confronted an old white Dillard's department store employee after the worker called him and his 10-year-old son "f—ing n——."

In a video that has garnered almost three million views, the Black dad identified as Muhammad Karim, says he asked the worker who he refers to as Homer but could not be verified by his nametag, for directions to a dressing room.

Upon returning to his son, he saw the child was crying.

"A tear came out my baby's eye and he said, 'Dad, you didn't hear what that man just called me?'" said Karim.

In the video, the father can be heard asking the worker, "I ask the question: what could he have done? What could the 10-year-old do to Homer to deserve to be called a 'f—ing n——?'

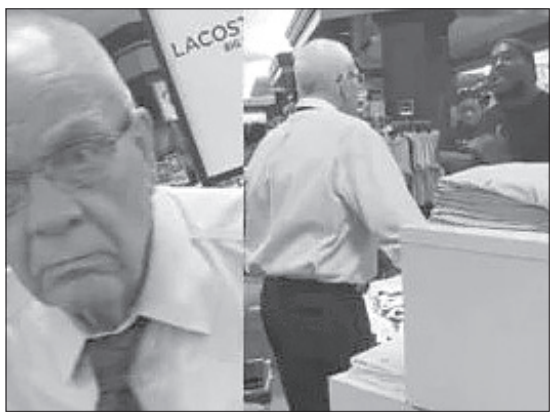
"It's unacceptable, you shouldn't do that. You don't know the impact of what you've done to my son. But maybe you were unaware."

He continued, "You shouldn't be speaking that way, period. If you know that, why do that, man?"

The employee said the outburst was due to pain in his leg.

"You hurt your leg, so you said f—ing n——?" Karim asked him.

The father admitted to CBS News, "The Prophet



Muhammad says 'don't be angry. Don't be angry. Don't be angry,'" he then pauses for a chuckle: "I'll be honest with you. I was angry. I was livid."

He resumed the rest of the conversation, "You don't go from hitting your foot to 'f—ing n——.' Life doesn't work that way. This is repetitive behavior."

The Dillard's worker then answered that he's worked at the store for over 20 years.

According to Dillard's corporate office, "Homer" is no longer employed by the company.

"The allegations made against our former employee were promptly investigated, found to be in clear violation of our standards, and his employment with Dillard's was immediately terminated," said Dillard's department store.

Weather Channel issues apology after racial slur appears during segment: 'This is your weather my N******'

Philadelphiaobserver.com

Viewers of the Weather Channel are reeling after a derogatory racial slur appeared on screen during a weather report, The Independent reports.

The station offered an apology after its channel Local on the 8s displayed the following graphic between a segment, "Hello Des Moines, This is your weather my N******," according to The Independent.

What makes the incident even more puzzling is the 24-hour cable weather network was recently obtained by media mogul Byron Allen'sAllen Media in 2018.

Journalist Matthew Keys immediately noticed the faux pas and posted a screenshot of the graphic on Twitter, "I've blurred it, but I'm pretty sure you can figure out what it said," Keys captioned his post, Complex reports.

The Weather Channel released a statement to clarify that the offensive sentence did not "originate" with them, according to Complex.

"A graphic during The Weather Channel cable network's 'Local on the 8s' presentation in Des Moines last evening included a racial slur," the statement read. "We removed this graphic as soon as we learned of it.

This did not originate with us, and we are in the process of investigating it further. We apologize to our viewers.

The Philadelphia Observer (USPS 009-609), serving Metropolitan Philadelphia PA is published weekly at 405 Lexington Avenue, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10174. Phone 212-213-8585. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER; send address changes to The Philadelphia Observer - 405 Lexington Avenue, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10174

Exploitative overdraft fees strip $15B from bank customers

House bill seeks to free cash-strapped consumers from high costs

By Charlene Crowell (TriceEdneyWire.com)

- Runaway prices for food, fuel and housing make most consumers anxious about whether they will have enough money for a given month. Even after adjusting spending to stretch dear dollars are far as possible, a lot of people remain perplexed about what else can be done to hold on in these hard times.

Customers with bank and credit union accounts need to pay close attention to their monthly statements to identify multiple charges for overdraft fees.

Marketed and sold as a 'customer convenience,' overdraft fees are charged every time the cost of a transaction is more than a checking account balance. Averaging $35 per usage, banks are bloating their profits – most often by exploiting the short-term cash needs of consumers who are usually just a few days away from their next deposit.

In return, banks and credit unions across the country rake in $15 billion each year from cash-strapped customers with an average account balance of $350 or less. More monetary misery is added by some banks' manipulative practices designed to maximize fees through delaying posting of account deposits, and/or reordering transaction .

It should be noted that some banks have voluntarily chosen to change or end their overdraft programs. Consumer advocates applaud lenders who have taken steps to reduce these costly fees.

Yet there is no legal requirement for other institutions to do so. Some lenders continue to charge three or more overdraft fees of $34 or more per day, often costing consumers more than $100 in a single day. A typical debit card overdraft fee, the most common overdraft source, comes from a transaction of less than $24, repaid within three days. Put in lending terms, a $34 overdraft fee for a $24 loan of three days is the equivalent of 17,000% APR.

As one consumer told the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), "$35 is a lot of money for a person that doesn't have any."

There's nothing inherently wrong about a financial institution earning a fair profit. But there is nothing fair when billion-dollar institutions design products to prey upon people with the fewest financial resources – just to boost their bottom lines.

"Rather than competing on quality service and attractive interest rates, many banks have become hooked on overdraft fees to feed their profit model," said CFPB Director Rohit Chopra.

Other CFPB research has found that consumers who are charged more than 10 overdraft fees a year account for 75 percent of overdraft fees each year.

If you're thinking 'there ought to be a law', New York Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney agrees.

More than a year ago, she proposed the Overdraft Protection Act and was joined by 30 co-sponsors. Since that time, the number of co-sponsors has doubled to 60 and now include House colleagues representing 25 states including: California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, and Texas. Companion legislation is also in the U.S. Senate.

The Overdraft Protection Act (H.R. 4277) would amend the Truth in Lending Act to strengthen fair and transparent bank practices. Among its provisions the bill would require "reasonable and proportional" fees in relation to the amount of the overdraft, expand prompt and detailed customer notifications and/or statements, and provide customers the opportunity to cancel a transaction before incurring a fee.

For example, currently it is legal for banks to change the order of transactions, so they can debit accounts from largest to smallest to increase the number of overdraft fees triggered. As the banks maximize their overdraft revenues, consumers are drained of the dollars that can keep their households' finances in the black. Rep. Maloney's bill would ban such practices.

Other research and advocacy bolsters Rep. Maloney's legislative goal. Congressional testimony from the Center for Responsible Lending (CRL) highlighted how consumers of color are harmed the most by ill-conceived institutional practices.

"By causing account closures and eroding trust in financial institutions, bank overdraft practices fuel financial exclusion," wrote CRL. "Banks that are pledging millions or billions of dollars in investment in underserved communities while continuing to rake in hundreds of millions, or billions, of dollars annually in overdraft fees, are stripping wealth from the same communities they are claiming to support… Congress must hold these regulators accountable while itself ensuring that all checking accounts are free from destructive overdraft practices."

As part of a July 12 news conference convened by Rep. Maloney, Nadine Chabrier, a CRL Senior Policy Counsel, underscored the organization's legislative support.

"Legislation from Congresswoman Maloney and from Senators Booker and Warren would provide consumers with much-needed relief by reining in the cost and frequency of overdraft fees," noted Chabrier. "Congress should pass these bills."

Charlene Crowell is a senior fellow with the Center for Responsible Lending. She can be reached at Charlene.crowell@responsiblelending.org.

As gun violence rises, congressional committee plans hearing with gun manufacturers

From page 3

de, Texas, and Buffalo, New York, the committee sent letters to gun manufacturers Daniel Defense, LLC, Smith & Wesson Brands, Inc., Sturm, Ruger & Company, Inc., and other manufacturers.

The letters requested information on the sale and marketing of AR-15-style semiautomatic rifles and similar firearms, including revenue and profit information, internal data on deaths or injuries caused by weapons they manufacture, and marketing and promotional materials.

On June 8, 2022, the committee held a hearing with survivors and affected family members from the mass shootings in Uvalde, Texas, and Buffalo, New York.

On July 7, following the Independence Day shooting in Highland Park, Illinois, Maloney sent letters to the CEOs of several gun manufacturers requesting their appearance at a committee hearing on gun violence.

"Our hearing will examine the role of gun manufacturers in flooding our communities with weapons of war and fueling America's gun violence crisis," Maloney continued.

"It is long past time for the gun industry to be held accountable for the carnage they enable and profit from."

The committee will livestream the hearing on YouTube and the Committee on Oversight and Reform website.

Scholars, experts make case to expand Supreme Court, abolish electoral college

From page 3

tinent in the 21st Century, said historian and political scientist William S. Bike.

Bike said he believes it's time to get rid of the Electoral College, and Democrats, while in the majority, should act.

"Republicans use every weapon at their disposal against Democrats, but Democrats tend to behave like someone bringing a tennis racket to a knife fight," stated Bike, the author of Winning Political Campaigns, a how-to guide on political campaigning.

"So, Democrats expanding the Supreme Court would be a weapon seldom used before in American history, but without it, the extreme right will continue taking away Americans' rights," Bike asserted.

"They're coming after Miranda, birth control, gay marriage, homosexuality, and possibly interracial marriage and racial equality.

"The negative to expanding the Supreme Court is that once the Democrats do it, the next Republican president will do it, then the next Democratic president. Eventually, the Supreme Court would become as big as a legislature. But it's a chance Democrats must take if they want to protect basic rights."

Georgetown University graduate Tim Rosenberger Jr., who's completing a JD/MBA at Stanford University, said expanding the high court can improve America.

However, eliminating the Electoral College could hamper the country's ability to preserve minority rights and ensure ongoing dynamism.

"Americans benefit from having smaller states that can be laboratories for innovation," Rosenberger stated.

"Justice Antonin Scalia once noted the oddity of how non-representative the Supreme Court is," Rosenberger noted.

"Every New York borough but Staten Island had a seat on the court for a time. At the same time, not one protestant, the prevailing American religion, sat on the court. Both the Supreme Court and the D.C. Circuit should start having geographically assigned seats with seats traditionally, if not explicitly, aligning with one person from each of the larger geographic circuits."

Rosenberger continued:

"Eliminating the electoral college would overly concentrate political power in large urban centers and move America away from a diverse and complicated social and political tapestry."

Content Writer Elena Zimmerman added that the benefits of expanding the Supreme Court in its current state are impossible to miss.

"Whatever the intentions were with the decision to appoint 9 judges, it would be difficult for anyone to argue the idea in mind was for one political party to appoint 66 percent of the justices of the most powerful judicial body in the country while systematically excluding the choices of elected presidents in the opposing party while in office," Zimmerman stated.

"It would also be difficult for anyone to argue that it should be acceptable for new potential justices to lie during their confirmation hearings about their intentions to rule if appointed.

"Expanding the court during a democratic president's tenure and with an evenly divided Senate could potentially balance this inequality of partisan power."

Zimmerman further concluded that there's "no longer a benefit to the Electoral College."

"Particularly when it can be used exclusively to the benefit of only one party to override the popular vote," she insisted.

Historians noted that officials created the Electoral College to give slave states more power and to keep an agent of England's King George from becoming president.

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Editorial - Opinion

Abortion — a theological issue and Christian responses

By Rev. Dr. Martha C. Taylor

We are living in a world where controversial, complex issues, disagreements, debates, misunderstandings are looming large. There are controversies on gun control, vaccines, living wages, Black lives matter, animal rights, religious freedom, health care, white supremacy, voting rights, Trump, Ukraine War, Covid spreading, mass killings and the congressional January 6th sedition hearings, to name a few.

In an earth-shattering decision on June 24, the Supreme Court overturned Roe v Wade. Justice Alito wrote "Abortion presents a profound moral issue on which Americans hold sharply conflicting views. Some believe fervently that a human person comes into being at conception and that abortion ends an innocent life. Others feel just as strongly that any regulation of abortion invades a woman's right to control her own body and prevents women from achieving full equality.

Still others in a third group think that abortion should be allowed under some, but not all circumstances, and those within this group hold a variety of views about the particular restrictions that should be imposed. The Court's decision held that there is no longer a federal constitutional right to an abortion, and going forward, abortion rights will be determined by each state. In. other words, abortion does not automatically become illegal nationwide, however in states that ban abortion, it could result in a felony and doctors could face prison time.

The abortion debate has profound implications on how theological views are preached and taught in individual churches, homes including seminaries. The pews are split. Some say abortion is murder, while others say, the woman has a right to control her body. This leads to the question: How does your faith shape your position on abortion? What Bible passages do you cite to justify your position?

Some profess to preach and teach a prophetic liberating gospel, yet when it comes to the theological and moral issue of abortion, they take a stance that they will not make a comment in public. This raises the question of who really speaks for the church. Can bishops, pastors, lay ministers, elders, and Sunday School teachers be expected to reflect the thinking of the membership? Does the membership dictate what can be preached? In the words of a well-known pastor, do we just deal with the sweet now and now, and not the nasty now and now? I believe he got it right. Are you a prophet who will speak on difficult sensitive subjects, or do you skirt them in favor of not upsetting the pews with realities that may be painful to some?

We must deal with moral sensitive issues without injuring the freedom of women. I believe the question of whether the church should be involved in social and political issues is not that difficult. The more difficult is why it should be involved and how, and more importantly using scripture to justify their position. What about those who take scripture as a means of justifying their position on moral issues. History informs us that enslaved women were forced to have sex with their slave masters as a means of birthing more slaves; the slave owners used the scripture, "slaves obey your masters."

With regards to abortion, some declare that God said abortion is murder, though they cannot find a thread of evidence in the bible to back their statement and rely on the commandment "thou shalt not kill." Some pastors have interpreted scripture to say, God does not want a woman preaching or teaching. Some pastors are taking scripture out of context on the pretext that the Lord is speaking, when it is highly possible their interpretation is a misinterpretation. This all suggests that people sometimes appeal to the Bible and other religious sources in selective and self-serving ways: They come to the Bible with their previously held moral assumptions and seek to find something in the Bible to justify them. The Bible does not talk explicitly about abortion, pro or con in any kind of way. It's just not there.

Overturning Roe assumes that some life, some bodies, are worth more than others — that some bodies can and should be restricted, controlled and used at will.

In the coming months as states create new abortion restrictions, the same kind of underground movement of women searching for safe abortions most likely will become a reality again. Will Christians accompany these women? Or, will the loudest Christian response to abortion continue to be the Religious Right, shouting from their place of privilege, piety and power? Dr. Obery Hendricks, biblical scholar and activist reminds us, "some Black Christians can be some of the most religiously conservative people in America."

Continue to pray for Brittney Grimes, our daughter, sister, friend.

I asked what kind of family

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Entertainment

Remembering

Nichelle Nichols 89, Lieutenant Uhura on Star Trek

By Bruce Weber

Nichelle Nichols on "Star Trek" in 1967. She portrayed Lieutenant Uhura (Photo: CBS via Getty Images)

Nichelle Nichols, the actress revered by "Star Trek" fans everywhere for her role as Lieutenant Uhura, the communications officer on the starship U.S.S. Enterprise, died on Saturday in Silver City, N.M. She was 89. The cause was heart failure, said Sky Conway, a writer and a film producer who was asked by Kyle Johnson, Nichols's son, to speak for the family.

Nichols had a long career as an entertainer, beginning as a teenage supper-club singer and dancer in Chicago, her hometown, and later appearing on television. She will forever be best remembered for her work on "Star Trek," the cult-inspiring space adventure series that aired from 1966 to 1969 and starred William Shatner as Captain Kirk, the heroic leader of the starship crew, Leonard Nimoy (who died in 2015) as his science officer and adviser, Mr. Spock, an ultralogical humanoid from the planet Vulcan and DeForest Kelley (who died in 1999) as Dr. McCoy, a/k/a Bones, the ship's physician.

A striking beauty, Nichols provided a frisson of sexiness on the bridge of the Enterprise. She was generally clad in a snug red doublet and black tights. Ebony magazine called her the "most heavenly body in 'Star Trek' on its 1967 cover. Her role, however, was both substantial and historically significant.

Uhura was an officer and a highly educated and well-trained technician who maintained a businesslike demeanor while performing her high-minded duties. Nichols was among the first Black women to have a leading role on a network television series, making her an anomaly on the small screen, which until that time had rarely depicted Black women in anything other than subservient roles.

In a November 1968 episode, during the show's third and final season, Captain Kirk and Lieutenant Uhura are forced to embrace by the inhabitants of a strange planet, resulting in what is widely thought to be the first interracial kiss in television history. Nichols's first appearances on "Star Trek" predated the 1968 sitcom "Julia," in which Diahann Carroll, playing a widowed mother who works as a nurse, became the first Black woman to star in a non-stereotypical role in a network series. But Uhura's influence reached far beyond television. In 1977 Nichols began an association with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, contracting as a representative and speaker to help recruit female and minority candidates for spaceflight training; the following year's class of astronaut candidates was the first to include women and members of minority groups.

In subsequent years, Nichols made public appearances and recorded public service announcements on behalf of the agency. In 2012, after she was the keynote speaker at the Goddard Space Center during a celebration of African American History Month, a NASA news release about the event lauded her help for the cause of diversity in space exploration.

"Nichols's role as one of television's first Black characters to be more than just a stereotype and one of the first women in a position of authority (she was fourth in command of the Enterprise) inspired thousands of applications from women and minorities," the release said. "Among them: Ronald McNair, Frederick Gregory, Judith Resnick, first American woman in space Sally Ride and current NASA administrator Charlie Bolden."

Grace Dell Nichols was born in Robbins, Ill., on Dec. 28, 1932 (some sources give a later year), and grew up in Chicago. Her father was, for a time, the mayor of Robbins, and a chemist. Tired of being called Gracie by her friends, she requested a different name from her mother, who liked Michelle but suggested Nichelle for the alliteration.

Nichols was a ballet dancer as a child and had a singing voice with a naturally wide range more than four octaves, she later said. While attending Englewood High School, she landed her first professional gig in a revue at the College Inn, a well-known Chicago nightspot. There she was seen by Duke Ellington, who employed her a year or two later with his touring orchestra as a dancer in one of his jazz suites.

Nichols appeared in several musical theater productions around the country during the 1950s. In an interview with the Archive of American Television, she recalled performing at the Playboy Club in New York City while serving as an understudy for Carroll in the Broadway musical "No Strings" (though she never went on).

In 1959, she was a dancer in Otto Preminger's film version of "Porgy and Bess." She made her television debut in 1963 in an episode of "The Lieutenant," a short-lived dramatic series about Marines at Camp Pendleton created by Gene Roddenberry, who went on to create "Star Trek." Nichols appeared on other television shows over the years, among them "Peyton Place" (1966), "Head of the Class" (1988) and "Heroes" (2007).

She also appeared onstage occasionally in Los Angeles, including in a one-woman show in which she did impressions of, and paid homage to, Black female entertainers who preceded her, including Lena Horne, Pearl Bailey and Eartha Kitt. But Uhura was to be her legacy. A decade after "Star Trek" went off the air, Nichols reprised the role in "Star Trek: The Motion Picture," and she appeared as Uhura, by then a commander, in five subsequent movie sequels through 1991.

Nichols was married and divorced twice. In her 1995 autobiography, "Beyond Uhura: Star Trek and Other Memories," she disclosed that she and Roddenberry, who died in 1991, had been romantically involved for a time. In an interview in 2010 for the Archive of American Television, she said that he had little to do with her casting in "Star Trek" but that he defended her when studio executives wanted to replace her.

When she took the role of Uhura, Nichols said, she thought of it as a mere job at the time, valuable as a résumé enhancer, she fully intended to return to the stage, as she wanted a career on Broadway. Indeed, she threatened to leave the show after its first season and submitted her resignation to Roddenberry. He told her to think it over for a few days.

In a story she often told, that Saturday night she was a guest at an event in Beverly Hills, Calif. "I believe it was an N.A.A.C.P. fund-raiser," she recalled in the Archive interview where the organizer introduced her to someone he described as "your biggest fan." "He's desperate to meet you," she recalled the organizer saying.

The fan, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., introduced himself. "He said, 'We admire you greatly, you know,' " Nichols said, and she thanked him and told him that she was about to leave the show. "He said, 'You cannot. You cannot.'" Dr. King told her that her role as a dignified, authoritative figure in a popular show was too important to the cause of civil rights for her to forgo. As Nichols recalled it, he said, "For the first time, we will be seen on television the way we should be seen every day." On Monday morning, she returned to Roddenberry's office and told him what had happened. "And I said, 'If you still want me to stay, I'll stay. I have to.'"

Ms. Nichols at 15th annual "Star Trek" convention in Las Vegas in 2016. She was the subject of a panel titled "Tribute to Nichelle Nichols" (Photo: Cabe Ginsberg/Getty Images

Eduardo Medina contributed reporting. A version of this article appears in print on Aug. 1, 2022, Section D, Page 8 of the New York edition with the headline: Nichelle Nichols, Early 'Trek' Star Who Boldly Blazed Path, Dies at 89. Order Reprints | Today's Paper | Subscribe

On the scene

Jackie Robinson's family attend star-studded ribbon-cutting ceremony for new museum

By Audrey J. Bernard

You can now add The Jackie Robinson Museum located at 75 Varick Street, SoHo, New York City, to places you must visit when you come to New York! On Tuesday, July 26, 2022, the Jackie Robinson Foundation (JRF) hosted a ribbon-cutting event commemorating the Jackie Robinson Museum's long-awaited opening dedicated to educating, inspiring and challenging visitors with the story of the man who broke Major League Baseball's color barrier in 1947 and fought for civil rights until his untimely passing in 1972. The museum will officially open to the public on September 5, 2022. Jackie's wife Rachel, and their children David and Sharon, along with the President & CEO of the Jackie Robinson Foundation, Della Britton, were joined by New York City Mayor Eric Adams, tennis legend Billie Jean King, former MLB pitcher CC Sabathia, movie director Spike Lee, and many more.

Robin Roberts of Good Morning America hosted the event which began with a musical introduction by the Black Fire Marching Band who fired up the crowd that stood as Rachel Robinson arrived and entered the museum to a long-lasting standing ovation. "The Jackie Robinson Museum will be New York's epicenter for bringing Black history forward into the present," Roberts said. "Today, the mission of the museum will be to educate, inspire, challenge and educate visitors about Jackie Robinson, the athlete, activist, patriot, entrepreneur, and family man."

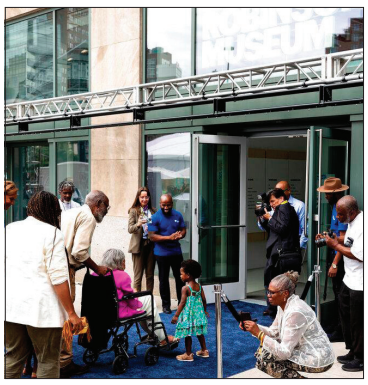
David Robinson was met with great pomp and circumstance onstage. During his poignant remarks, Robinson said, "This moment in history is now a challenge for all of us. The issues that Jackie Robinson challenged in 1947 are still with us. When you look at this museum, look at the greatness of the accomplishment, but also the challenges that were faced and the challenge that we face ahead of us."

At the conclusion of the program, guests were invited to roam the museum's impressive 19,000-square-foot-space which features 4,500 artifacts and 40,000 historical images. These artifacts include letters, clothing, accolades, a timeline of his life and insightful videos throughout the museum that bring Robinson's journey to life, detailing his accomplishments as a baseball player and civil rights pioneer. The museum's mission is to achieve Rachel Robinson's goal to inspire future generations to be the next group of leaders in the fight for social justice. Mrs. Robinson expresses these values in a quote posted at the museum's entrance. "I hope this tribute to my beloved Jack ignites the humanitarian spirit in all of us, not only when we convene around sport, but in all of our interactions," the quote reads. "May it spark dialogue that leads to better understanding of ourselves, our shared experiences, and the plight of others."

As part of this initiative, the museum specifically strives to reach younger generations. This includes online programing in schools across the country already underway, with the museum also featuring classroom spaces. Britton spoke specifically about the importance of the new museum inspiring the next generation of activists. "What we're excited about now is putting the programming in place," she said. "Bringing in kids to not only learn about Jackie but to be inspired by Jackie."

The next day, Wednesday, July 27 at 6:30 PM, General Motors hosted the Grand Opening of the Jackie Robinson Museum for an exclusive screening of Chevrolet and Uninterrupted's film "After Jackie" which took place in spacious tents across the street from the museum. "After Jackie" is a documentary detailing the wave of Black baseball players that followed in the legends footsteps. Bill White, Curt Flood, and Bob Gibson picked up where Jackie left off and this is their story. This resplendent evening included an exclusive screening of the film, museum tours, a celebrity talkback panel, and cocktail reception. A great time to celebrate one of baseball's all-time greats was a memorable feat. (Photos courtesy Jackie Robinson Foundation unless otherwise noted)

Rachel Robinson assisted by her son David Robinson cut the ribbon at the Jackie Robinson Museum opening Tuesday, July 26, 2022, in New York



Rachel Robinson, wife of Jackie Robinson, enters the newly-opened Jackie Robinson Museum, Tuesday, July 26, 2022, in New York (AP Photo-Julia Nikhinson)

David Robinson addresses audience at Inauguration of Jackie Robinson Museum (Daniel Shirey-MLB)

Jackie Robinson's beloved widow Rachel Robinson is overwhelmed by the love (Daniel Shirey-MLB)

ABC's Robin Roberts speaks to crowd (Daniel Shirey-MLB)

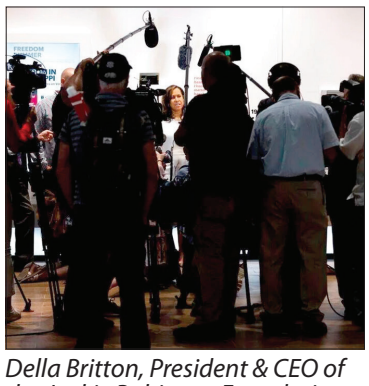
Museum Exhibit

Museum Exhibit

Museum Exhibit (Seitu Oronde)

Celebrity guest Spike Lee (Daniel Shirey-MLB)

Celebrity guest Billie Jean King (Daniel Shirey-MLB)



Della Britton, President & CEO of the Jackie Robinson Foundation, speaks to the media inside the Jackie Robinson Museum (AP-Julia Nikhinson)

Jackie & Rachel Robinson (Seitu Oronde)

Museum Exhibit (Seitu Oronde)

On the scene

Derek Khan — stylist & creator of 'Ghetto Fabulous' — life story rights acquired by veteran music executive Beverly Paige

Audrey J. Bernard

Celebrity stylist Derek Khan, creator of 'Ghetto Fabulous' (Image Credits Derek Khan Facebook)

Veteran music executive Beverly Paige has acquired the rights to the extravagant and controversial life story of her friend, the late legendary stylist Derek Khan, the visionary stylist to music's fashion icons Salt-n-Pepa, Mary J. Blige, Lauryn Hill, Pink and Aretha Franklin. The *Rags to Riches to Rags* docu-drama. Currently, Paige and her team are exploring television, film and publishing deals on the visionary stylist who was the stylist to the who's who in fashion and entertainment and whose glamourous career went from red carpets to prison to villas in Dubai.

"Derek has a fascinating rag to riches to rags story," said Paige, who was the first Black woman to be named vice president of publicity and promotions at a major record label. "I had met Derek in the early 1990s when I was vice-president of publicity at Island Records, and he was beginning his career as a fashion stylist. For years, he had worked in couture fashion shops Gucci and Givenchy. I retained him to re-imagine my clients Salt-n-Pepa. Thanks to him, Salt-n-Pepa was the showstopper at the 1995 Grammy Awards.

Khan was a visionary who created an astonishing high fashion movement in hip-hop. "We called it *fabulous* said Paige, and Derek called it *ghetto fabulous*." Paige and Khan began partnering with the luxury goods industry to showcase high fashion on top hip-hop artists. "I would write letters of introduction to the clothing and jewelry designers while Khan swathed Mary J. Blige in white fur for her 1997 hit album cover *Share My World*." Khan fabulously stylized stars in luxury couture and gems from Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana and Christian Dior to Harry Winston. Khan was working for me to legitimatize his work," said Paige. "Derek had access to luxury couture and no one else was doing it at that time. I told him at the 1995 Grammys, Salt-n-Pepa needed to be draped in couture fur coats and diamonds when they were doing interviews. That look created a new fashion era."

Khan, who was born in Trinidad, died of COVID in Dubai in 2021 at age 63. He has been applauded by *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* for glamourizing hip-hop's stars. He stylized Lauryn Hill's boho-chic look for her legendary Grammy-winning debut album "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill." He outfitted Lil' Kim in her famed red Chanel leather cowboy outfit for the 2002 Grammy Awards. He brokered a deal for Pink with Chanel. For Aretha Franklin, he draped the superstar in $10 million worth of diamonds for a July 4 Washington DC concert.

Khan fabulously stylized stars in luxury couture and gems from Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana and Christian Dior to Harry Winston, Tiffany and Bulgari. He is the only stylist to be honored at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's "Greatest Rock Costume Exhibit." By the early 2000s, Khan was no longer a superstar stylist. Emerging artists were selecting new fashion advisors. Tragically, Khan began to pawn the on-loan gems for cash to support his extravagant lifestyle. In 2003, he was sentenced to prison on charges of defrauding eight of New York's most prestigious jewelers, including Harry Winston, Graff and Piaget. He had borrowed more than $1.5 million worth of diamond earrings, necklaces and watches in the names of superstar clients. After his two-year prison sentence from 2003 to 2005, he was deported back to Trinidad.

Khan left Trinidad for Dubai with a friend's help. "He has been accepted into the society of wealthy expatriates and Saudi royalty, even by those Mr. Khan said are aware of his prior accommodations," wrote the *New York Times* in 2008. "At the time of his death in Dubai, he was a consulting fashion stylist for the wealthy and also designed a line of jewelry called the Derek Khan collection. "I am thrilled that Beverly Paige will be telling my brother's remarkable story," said Wendy Kreuzer-Khan, Khan's sister. "She had been a good friend and supporter to Derek for many years."

Paige has been vice president of press and public relations for Interscope Records, Polygram Label Group, and Universal Island Def Jam. Her lengthy list of music clients has included Jay-Z, Luther Vandross, Kool and The Gang and the Jackson Family Tour. She is credited with launching the music careers of icons Queen Latifah, Salt-n-Pepa and Kurtis Blow. Paige is currently collaborating with manager Jerry Silverhardt and attorney Mike Dawson on developing book, film, and television projects on the life of Derek Khan. For additional information please visit the creator of hip-hop's "ghetto fabulous" fashion movement the creator of hip-hop's "ghetto fabulous" fashion movement Fern Gillespie, Public Relations Communication Consultant, 917-334-9298.) (Photos courtesy Paigemakers LLC)

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Premiere

SONY Pictures' assassin movie 'Bullet Train' will kill you with amazing action

By Audrey J. Bernard

Everyone wins with Brad Pitt's return to the big screen in Sony Pictures' action-thriller "Bullet Train" with wit, candor and lots of eye candy moves! He makes violence sexy. He just can't help himself. Plus he's so nice — just ask anyone who has ever worked with him. Who else could get big names to make cameos in his flick without credits? "Bullet Train" is faster than a moving train and filled with as many happenings – daring stunts (Pitt performed 95% of his stunts), sexual overtones, gruesome fight scenes and pervasive language. The story is as fast as the high-tech moving train where the action takes place. "Bullet Train" follows five assassins as they aim to complete their individual missions at the expense of each other while aboard a high-speed commuter rail in Japan.

SYNOPSIS: In "Bullet Train" Brad Pitt stars as Ladybug, an unlucky assassin determined to do his job peacefully after one too many gigs gone off the rails. Fate, however, may have other plans, as Ladybug's latest mission puts him on a collision course with lethal adversaries from around the globe—all with connected, yet conflicting, objectives—on the world's fastest train. The end of the line is just the beginning in this non-stop thrill-ride through modern-day Japan from David Leitch, the director of Deadpool 2.

CREW: Directed by David Leitch. Screenplay by Zak Olkewicz. Based upon the book Maria Beetle by Kotaro Isaka. Produced by Kelly McCormick, David Leitch, Antoine Fuqua. Executive Producers Brent O'Connor, Ryosuke Saegusa, Yuma Terada, Kat Samick. Cinematography by Jonathan Sela. Music by Dominic Lewis. Stunts coordinated by Greg Rementer.

CAST: Brad Pitt, Joey King, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Brian Tyree Henry, Andrew Koji, Hiroyuki Sanada, Michael Shannon, Benito A Martínez Ocasio, and Sandra Bullock.

SONY Picture's star-studded red-carpet premiere was held at the Regency Village theatre in Westwood, California, August 1, 2022, and was attended by the cast and crew of the film. The event which overflowed with glitz, grandeur and glory was led by the ageless movie star Pitt who was having unabashed fun with his co-stars even taking a flying leap in front of them as everyone laughed. Fun was a prerequisite for all involved in the making of this film admits director **David Leitch who** said, "We made this at the height of the pandemic before the vaccine. It was a crazy, cathartic experience for everybody. It's been so much fun making it, and it's been like a reunion these last couple of days."The movie will stream on Hulu on Friday, August 5, 2022. (Photos courtesy Sony Pictures)

Brad Pitt having a fun moment on the red carpet

Brian Tyree Henry, Aaron Taylor-Johnson

Masi Oka

Simu Liu

Thuso Mbedu

The cast of Bullet Train on the red carpet

Joey King

Logan Lerman

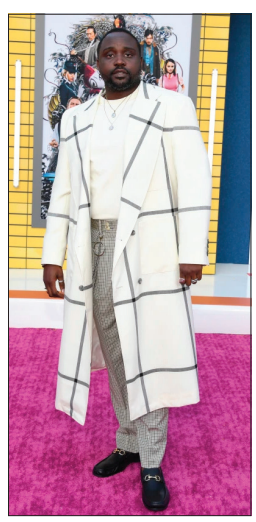
Maddie Ziegler

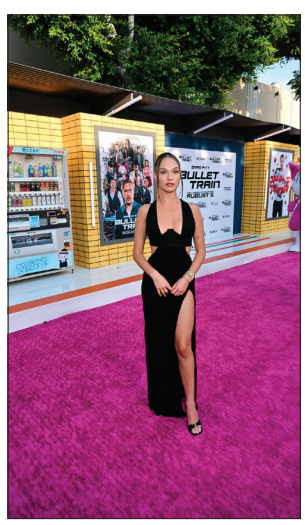
Zazie Beetz

Brad Pitt

Aaron Taylor

Bad Bunny


Brian Tyree Henry



Maddy Ziegler

Basketball legend Bill Russell dies at 88

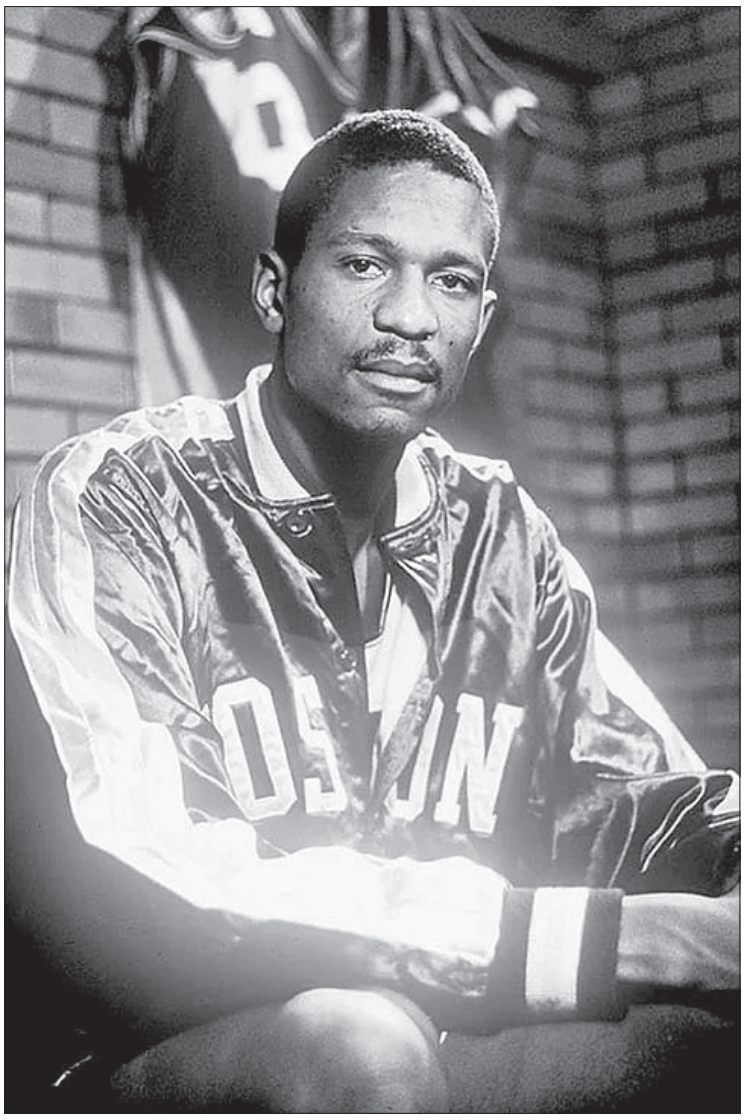
By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire

Boston Celtics Legend Bill Russell, one of professional basketball's greatest players and the sport's most crowned champion, has died at the age of 88.

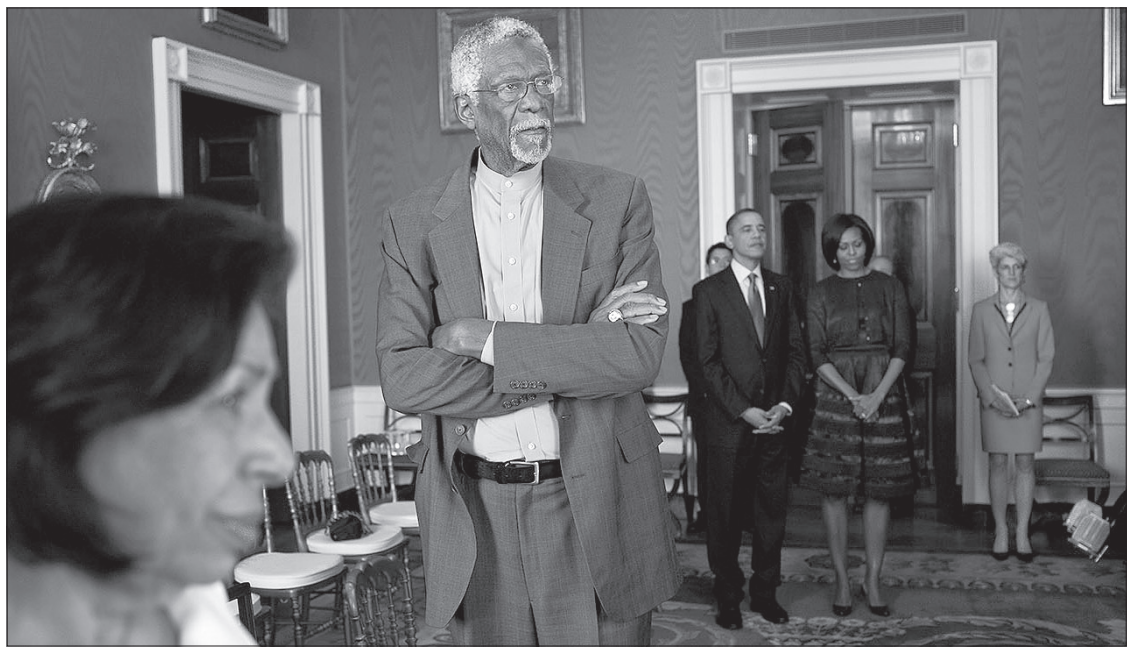
Russell, who won 11 NBA titles as a player and two as a player-coach, died "peacefully" with his wife, Jeannine, at his side, a statement on social media said.

Jeannine said funeral arrangements are pending.

"But for all the winning, Bill's understanding of the struggle is what illuminated his life. From boycotting a 1961 exhibition game to unmask too-long-tolerated discrimination, to leading Mississippi's first integrated basketball camp in the combustible wake of Medgar Evans' assassination, to decades of activism ultimately recognized by his receipt of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Bill called out injustice with an unforgiving candor that he intended would disrupt the status quo, and with a powerful example that, though never his humble intention, will forever inspire teamwork, selflessness, and thoughtful change," the statement read.



President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama wait in the Green Room of the White House with Sylvia Mendez and Bill Russell as recipients of the 2010 Presidential Medal of Freedom are introduced in the East Room, Feb. 15, 2011.



Bill Russell wearing a Boston Celtics jacket in 1957 (Photo: John G. Zimmerman for Sports Illustrated / Wikimedia Commons)

It continued:

"Bill's wife, Jeannine, and his many friends and family thank you for keeping Bill in your prayers. Perhaps you'll relive one or two of the golden moments he gave us or recall his trademark laugh as he delighted in explaining the real story behind how those moments unfolded.

"And we hope each of us can find a new way to act or speak up with Bill's uncompromising, dignified, and always constructive commitment to principle. That would be one last and lasting win for our beloved #6."

President Barack Obama presented the Medal of Freedom in 2011, and Russell won five NBA Most Valuable Player awards.

He made the All-Star team in 12 of the 13 years he played in the league. The prolific big man finished his career in 1969 with 21,620 career rebounds, an average of 22.5 per game, and led the league in rebounding four times.

He grabbed 51 rebounds in one game, 49 in two others, and a dozen consecutive seasons of 1,000 or more rebounds.

Many viewed Russell as the greatest player in history until Michael Jordan arrived in the 1980s and 1990s and Lebron James in the 2000s.

Born in Monroe, Louisiana, in 1934, Russell's family moved to the San Francisco area, where he attended McClymonds High School in Oakland.

He earned a scholarship to play at the University of San Francisco and helped lead the basketball school to an astounding 56 straight wins and back-to-back NCAA titles.

As noted by ESPN, Russell was most visible as a color commentator on televised basketball games for CBS with Rick Barry.

Russell later explained in a newspaper article that he never found a comfort zone behind the microphone.

"The most successful television is done in eight-second thoughts, and the things I know about basketball, motivation, and people go deeper than that," Russell told the Sacramento Bee.

In 1974, Russell earned election to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. In 1980, he was voted Greatest Player in the History of the NBA by the Professional Basketball Writers Association of America.

He was part of the 75th Anniversary Team announced by the NBA in October 2021.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., president and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, shared the following in a statement released after learning of Russell's passing: "The National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) salutes the memory and outstanding legacy of Bill Russell. He was the greatest on the NBA basketball court and he was also one of the strongest voices across the nation and world who advocated for freedom justice and equality. The NNPA extends our condolences to the Russell fa

102-year-old World War II vet from segregated mail unit receives Congressional Gold Medal

Philadelphiaobserver.com

On Tuesday, Romay Davis, 102, was recognized for her service at an event at Montgomery City Hall. It comes on the heels of President Joe Biden's March decision to sign a bill authorizing the Congressional Gold Medal for the unit, which is referred to as the "Six Triple Eight."

At the end of World War II, packages and letters sent to U.S. troops had built up in European warehouses by the time Allied troops were moving toward the heart of Hitler's Germany. However, this mail was vital as it served as the primary connection between home and the front in the days before modern communication.

Organizing and monitoring this large backlog in a military that was racially segregated was a job left to the largest Black women group to serve in the war, known as the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion. Davis, who is the oldest living member of the unit, was finally honored for her work.

In June 1945, only a month after the end of the war in Europe, Davis' group sailed to France to begin working on mounds of mail there. They worked through deplorable conditions, cutting down a six-month backlog to just three months.

The 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion are credited with ensuring aid got to the frontlines, easing the worries of mothers, and saving marriages, according to a press release. For their contributions, the 6888th received a monument that was dedicated in 2018 at Buffalo Soldier Military Park at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

International

Ivorian parliament to reconsider polygamy in a setback for women's equality

(GIN) –

A bill before parliament in the Ivory Coast would upend monogamy and restore polygamy–a marriage that includes one husband and at least two wives. Outraged women's groups call it a return to inequality.

The move mirrors setbacks around the world including the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on Roe vs Wade. The bill, proposed by Yacouba Sangare of the ruling Rally of Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace, would acknowledge a practice still widespread across the country and therefore, he says, one that should be legally permitted.

"Men have multiple wives and communities accept that. Exclusive monogamy doesn't fit with our realities, our customs.

"We can't just copy-paste legislation that was put in place in Western countries. We have to give people the option," he maintains.

While polygamy has declined in recent years it is still widely accepted in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Nigeria, with a 10th of the population living in polygamous households, according to a 2019 study conducted by the Pew Research Center.

In Ivory Coast, 12 percent of all households are polygamous, according to the same study.

In Kenya, almost 1.5 million Kenyans–or 10 percent of the married population–are in a polygamous marriage, according to the Kenya Population and Housing Census. But women's rights groups call this a gross underestimate as most of these marriages are customary and not registered.

The prospect of returning to outdated traditions has women's rights advocates seeing a step back in the fight for equality.

"We can't legalize polygamy to satisfy a man's libido," legal expert Désirée Okobé told the French news service France24.

"A man chooses to have more than one wife for personal, egotistical reasons. Legalizing polygamy would be a setback for Ivorian women who still face systemic inequalities and discrimination," she said in an interview.

"It's an excuse to justify the unjustifiable. This is not for women. This is all about men getting their way," she says.

Most polygamous marriages across Africa fuel poverty, activists say, with husbands neglecting one family over another–leaving thousands of women and children impoverished and easy prey for exploitation.

Women's rights organizations in Ivory Coast say they will fight the bill and do everything they can to prevent it from becoming part of the law. Former solidarity and women's rights minister Constance Yai has been one of the most vocal critics of Sangare's plan.

"All the noise you are hearing is being made by people who are using this law as a pretext to express once again their resentment of women," she said. "This is nothing new. The (equality) law merely formalizes what we all knew already–gender equality in marriage. Protesting against this law should stop."

The UN Commission on Human Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women consider that polygamous marriages discriminate against women and have recommended their prohibition. w/pix of polygamy among the Maasai

Funding for African victims of drought sees deep cuts as money flows to Europe

(GIN) –

The war in Ukraine is draining millions of dollars away from crises in Africa as funds are being redirected to Europe.

Somalia, facing a food shortage largely driven by the war, could be the most vulnerable. Its aid funding is less than half of last year's level while Western donors have sent more than $1.7 billion to respond to the war in Europe.

A $2.2 billion appeal for Ukraine is almost 80% funded, according to U.N. data–an "exceptional" level for any crisis at the midway point of the year. By comparison, a smaller appeal for Somalia is just 30% funded.

"They're not saying openly, 'We're focused on Ukraine,' " said Nimo Hassan, director of the Somalia NGO Consortium. "But you can see what they're doing in Ukraine."

Hassan and several others said they believe donor countries understand the urgency, but decision-makers in capitals like Brussels and London appear distracted by the war in Europe.

In one case, a donor preparing to give a half-million dollars to a Somali aid group told its executive director and former Somali vice president Hussein Kulmiye it was redirecting the money to help Ukrainians instead.

Meanwhile, over 80 million people in the eastern African region are food insecure. Acute malnutrition is high, especially among children.

"We're really trying to stave off mass deaths at this point," Sarah Charles, assistant to the administrator for USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, told the AP, adding that "unfortunately, the nature of these crises is such that they go slow and then go very fast."

At a single hospital in Somalia, more than two dozen children have died of hunger in the past two months. Dr. Yahye Abdi Garun has watched their emaciated parents as they stumble in from rural areas that are gripped by the driest drought in decades. And yet no humanitarian aid arrives.

Fleeing the drought, Somalis fill more than 500 camps in the city of Baidoa. There, aid workers are forced to make "horrific" choices to help one camp and ignore 10 others, Norwegian Refugee Council Secretary General Jan Egeland said, telling The Associated Press he is "angry and ashamed." His group's Ukraine appeal was fully funded within 48 hours, but its Somalia appeal is perhaps a quarter funded as thousands of people die.

New film spotlights world's only female army in Kingdom of Dahomey

(GIN) –

The only documented female army In modern history was that of the Kingdom of Dahomey–now southern Benin–which, by the 1800s, had thousands of female troops.

In September, a film version that portrays the lives of these warrior women will be seen in cinemas around the country. In the meantime, a trailer of the film can be seen on YouTube. It features Viola Davis and Hero Fiennes.

"The Sacred Ibis" posting on YouTube, explains that the Kingdom of Dahomey was located in present-day Benin from 1600-1904 and became a regional power in the 18th century. The Dahomey Mothers, known as the Agooji, were the all-female army trained to kill while striking fear in the European colonizers.

The King often picked them as teenagers for their strength and beauty. By 1800, up to 4000 women were fighting for the Kingdom. They live on through dances performed in Benin today.

Nanlèhoundé Houédanou is a survivor. "My Amazon was gentle," said Houédanou, who, at 85, is one of the last people on Earth to have grown up with one. "She was known for protecting children," she told the Washington Post.

Researchers have spent decades combing through European and West African archives to craft a portrait from the jottings of French officers, British traders and Italian missionaries.

Of close to 3,000 comments on YouTube, most were very positive. "It is incredibly rare that goosebumps and complete awe overwhelm me the instant a trailer begins. This changes that!" wrote Derrick Ensey.

"Everything about this is epic on an astronomical level. The most subtle thing about it is the TIMING. At a time when women are being attacked, this is total female empowerment right here. Never underestimate a unifying message!

"The previous depictions of the all-women Agojie warriors, also known as the Amazons, portrayed the female soldiers as "beasts" and "mannish. Davis and director Gina Prince-Blythewood sought instead to bring the authenticity of the story to the big screen instead of racial stereotypes."

"These women were fascinating and didn't need to be embellished or glossy," Prince-Blythewood told Vanity Fair. "I wanted it to be real and visceral and raw. We didn't want to show them as just one thing — badass women who killed. They also laughed and loved and cried. We wanted to show their full humanity, not just the cool part that that would look good in a trailer."

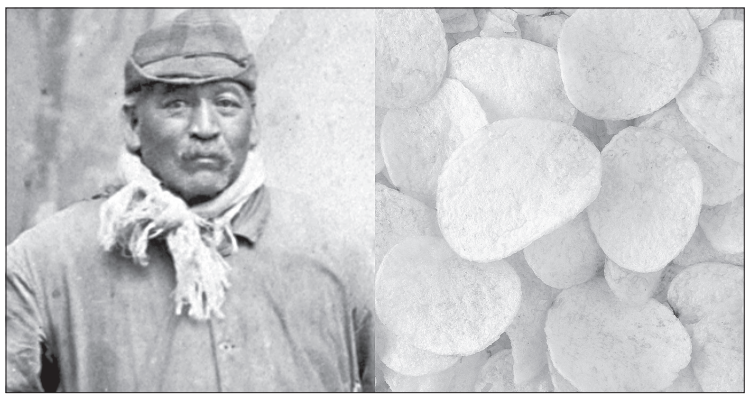
"The French made sure this history wasn't known," said the Beninese economist Leonard Wantchekon, a professor of international affairs at Princeton University. "They said we were backward, that they needed to 'civilize us,' but they destroyed opportunities for women that existed nowhere else in the world."

Now a team of Beninese researchers is working to reshape the narrative. For the last three years, historians at the African School of Economics, a private university that Wantchekon founded near Cotonou, the capital, have been tracking down descendants of Amazons across the nation.

They aim to glean local memories for a book that can be taught in schools — to present a three-dimensional view of the real Amazons. Only 50 of the women are thought to have survived the two-year war with France. The last died in the 1970s. w/pix of Benin's women warriors

Chef George Crum: A deep-fried stunt gone right

By Tamara Shiloh



Cornelius Vanderbilt, a steamship owner, sat in the dining room of Moon's Lake House in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., a high-end restaurant that catered to wealthy Manhattan families. It was the summer of 1853 and working in the kitchen was George Crum (1824–1914), the establishment's cook.

The meal being prepared was likely woodcock or partridge from the restaurant's grounds, served with French fries. But when the dish was served, Vanderbilt refused it, arguing that "the French fries are too thick."

This angered Crum so much so that he would prepare the potatoes again, but this time cut into slices as thin as he could make them. He dipped them in the hot oil, frying them to a crisp. He placed the browned and brittle rounds on the plate before sending it to the table.

To Crum's surprise, Vanderbilt was "thrilled with the novel snack." Crum's dish soon became a regular part of the Moon's Lake House menu. Crum was onto something and wanted more.

By 1860, Crum opened his own restaurant: Crum's Place. There, millionaires like Vanderbilt stood in line for hours for what Crum dubbed Saratoga Chips.

During his youth, Crum, born George Speck in Saratoga Lake, N.Y., worked as a guide in the Adirondack Mountains and as an Indian trader. Over time, he began to realize his passion for cooking and focused on working as a chef. The restaurant and the success of his snack dish were a part of his dream; he had created a luxury.

Unfortunately, he never patented Saratoga Chips, and never distributed them outside of New England. This opened the door for others to claim to have been the snack's original inventor, fueling the debate regarding that person's true identity.

In 1895, William Tappendon began to make the first attempt to place potato chips on local grocery store shelves. In 1921, the Hanover Home Potato Chip Company was established. Soon grocers in numerous areas around the United States were selling chips in bulk. Laura Scudder began putting potato chips into wax paper bags in 1926, giving birth to the bag-of-chips concept.

Herman Lay founded Lay's in 1932 in Nashville, Tenn., which led to phenomenal success not only for him, but also other potato-chip makers.

Historian Dave Mitchell researched those who took credit for the creation of the potato chip, including Vanderbilt, both of the Moons, Crum's sister Kate Wicks, the restaurant's manager Hiram Thomas, and various Lake House cooks.

His research included the possibility that the potato chip was not invented in Saratoga at all, though it certainly earned its popularity there. The potato chip's true origin, Mitchell concluded, "will probably never be known."

Crum closed his restaurant in 1890 and died in 1914 at the age of 90. More than 150 years later his delicacy has gone on to even greater fame. Today, Americans alone consume about 1.5 billion pounds of potato chips every year.

Kids can learn more about George Crum's story in Anne Renaud's fictional picture book "Mr. Crum's Potato Predicament."

Angelina Jolie celebrates daughter's acceptance to Spelman College

Philadelphiaobserver.com

As August begins, parents across the country are celebrating their children as they head off to start college. One famous face set the internet on fire with support for her daughter.

According to USA Today, Angelina Jolie's daughter, Zahara Marley Jolie-Pitt, is set to attend HBCU Spelman College, and the Oscar-winning actress couldn't be more excited.

The Maleficent star posted a photo of her daughter and five other young women on Instagram with the caption, "Zahara with her Spelman sisters! Congratulations to all new students starting this year. A very special place and an honor to have a family member as a new Spelman girl."

Jolie adopted Zahara from Ethiopia in 2005 when she was a baby, with Brad Pitt adopting her later that year.

At a Spelman event that welcomed new students, the UN humanitarian was pulled into the "Electric Slide," which she gave a good try before bowing out to watch. The other parents in attendance seemed to treat her as just another proud mom, with one of them giving her a fist bump when she left the dance floor.

Jenifer Lewis gets well-deserved star on Hollywood Walk of Fame

Philadelphiaobserver.com

*Congrats are in order to legendary entertainer #JeniferLewis who received her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Her work spans decades as she has made an impact in television, film, music, and comedy.

On Friday, she was honored for her contributions to the entertainment industry, and she was joined by some fellow heavy hitters to celebrate her big moment.

During the ceremony for her star, Jenifer thanked her supporters who said that the moment was long overdue and said, "I want to thank those of who you put those comments on the internet, for loving and supporting me throughout the years. But what you don't know is I just wasn't ready because I had not done the real work. The real work was off-stage and off camera."

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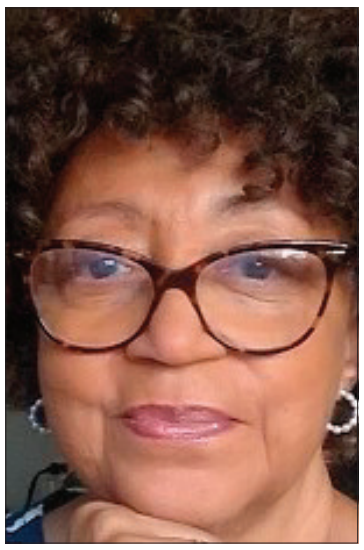
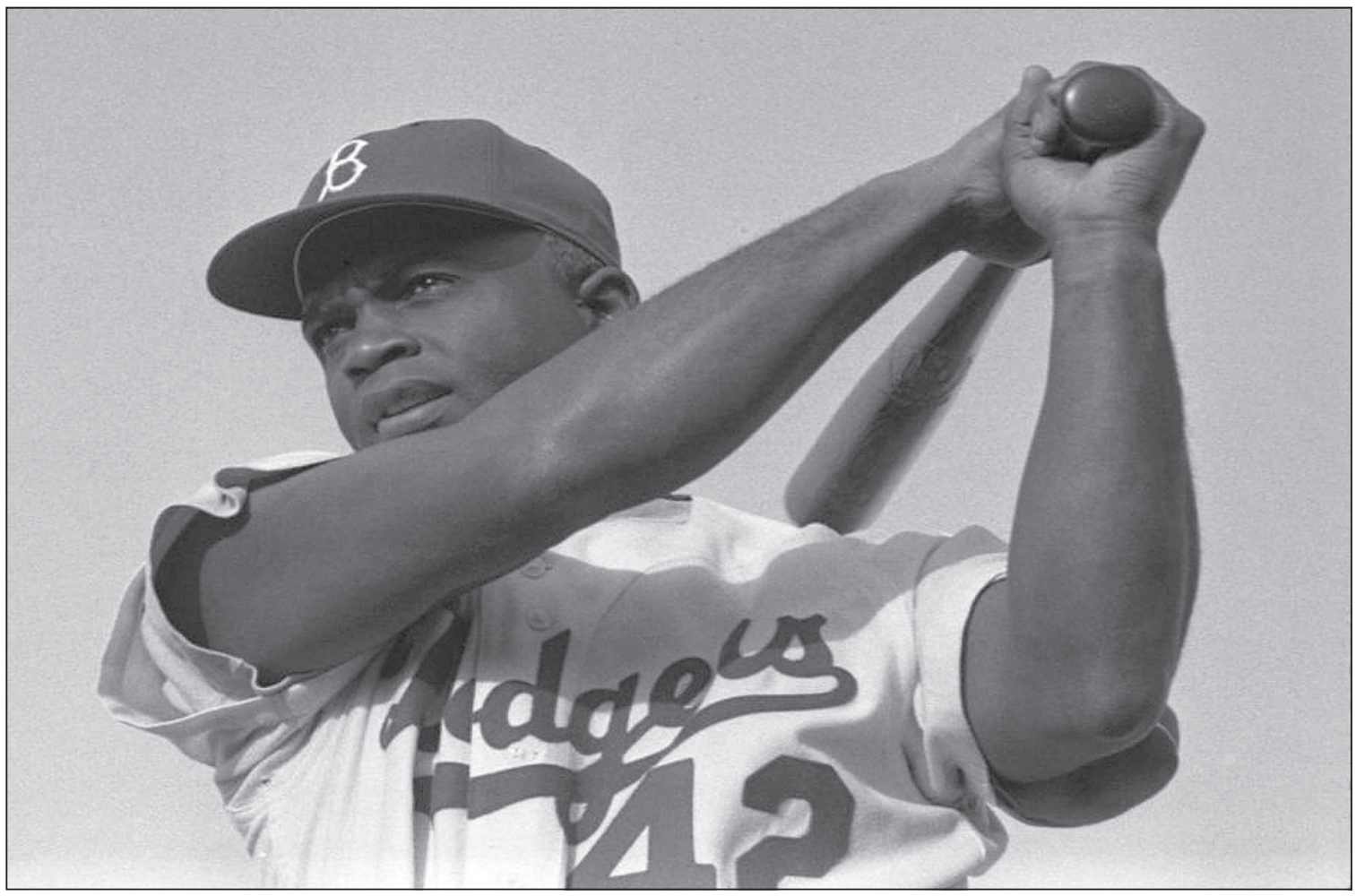
Ponder this

Did you see Jackie Robinson hit that ball?



By Hazel Rosetta Smith



Jackie Robinson Barrier Breaker

My brother had no interest in baseball, my father's favorite sport. He preferred to snatch the wheels from my baby doll carriage to build a scooter with a crate and race through the streets with his friends. I was my daddy's little girl, and I wanted to go wherever he went. At the age of 7, we went to Ebbetts Field in Brooklyn for what I thought was a really special baseball game. The Brooklyn Dodgers were playing the New York Yankees in the preseason exhibition game. But, it turned out to be more than I understood at the time and remains an unforgettable memory to this day.

My father and his friends, along with hundreds of other Black men, stood to their feet and raised their hats when Jackie Robinson, the newest player on the Brooklyn Dodgers, wearing Number 42, came onto the field. And he was Black!

It was written in the papers that the stadium held a crowd of 26,623 spectators on that day, and more than 14,000 were Black. Money was tight, yet, Black men were there for that momentous moment, and Black fans began filling Ebbetts Field to cheer on Robinson, whenever the Dodgers came to town, after that game.

On our way home, my father tried to explain the ugly insults hurled at Robinson. I couldn't understand why whenever the ball came within inches of Jackie's hands, the stadium would erupt. No matter how good he played, the very sight of him on the field, seemed to annoy those white people.

My father rehashed the game with my mother, listening to the news on the radio that night. Though he was proud, his anger and hurt were obvious, whenever he heard the negative commentary. Sports writers reported that Robinson's promotion met a generally mixed reception among newspapers and white major league players. However, racial tension was present in the Dodger clubhouse. Some players wanted to sit out, rather than play alongside Robinson. Dodgers' manager Leo Durocher had stepped in, "I do not care if the guy is yellow or black, or if he has stripes like a (expletive) zebra. I'm the manager of this team, and I say he plays. I will trade all of you."

In 1949, when other Black players made it to the major league, my father's pride and support for Robinson, never swayed. He reminded us that the Dodgers signing Robinson, began the end of racial segregation in professional baseball, and that was an undisputed fact.

When Jackie retired from baseball in 1956, a new morning brew appeared on our kitchen table, celebrating Jackie Roosevelt Robinson, the vice president of Chock Full O' Nuts, a coffee company. My father sipped and smiled every morning as he drank the coffee, starting the day with memories of his favorite athlete.

My father and I continued to sing this popular song written by Buddy Johnson. "Did you see Jackie Robinson hit that ball? It went zooming cross the left field wall. Yeah boy, Jackie hit that ball. And, when he swung his bat, the crowd went wild, because he knocked that ball a solid mile. Did he hit it? Yeah, and that ain't all. Satchel Paige is mellow, so is Campanella, Newcombe and Doby, too. But it's a natural fact, when Jackie comes to bat, the other team is through. Did you see Jackie Robinson hit that ball? Did he hit it? Yeah, and that ain't all. He stole home. Yes, Jackie's real gone."

I know for sure, if my daddy was still around, we would be first online on September 5th, opening day of The Jackie Robinson Museum on Varick Street, NYC. Thank you, Mr. Robinson, you are not forgotten.

[Hazel Rosetta Smith is a journalist, playwright, and artistic director of Help Somebody Theatrical Ministries. Retired, former Woman's Editor and Managing Editor of the New York Beacon. Contact Hazel Rosetta Smith at misshazel@twc.com and online at www.hazelrosettasmith.com]

From Baseball to Coffee

Sports

Andrew Rosario, Sports Editor

Caught on video: Basketball coach, referee spar at AAU Tournament

Philadelphiaobserver.com

This is one game tape the coaches likely won't be reviewing anytime soon.

A brawl at an AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) basketball game—played by kids, mind you—over the weekend in Kansas City has gone viral after it was caught on video.

According to TMZ Sports, a coach aggressively approached a referee. A fight ensued before the referee was jumped by several people.The incident, caught on a shaky mobile phone video with unhelpful and sparse profanity-laced narration, occurred at the AAU-sanctioned Hardwood Classic X RecruitLook Summer Finale Saturday morning.

In the video, a coach confronts a referee, yelling at him for an apparent technical foul called against one of his players. As the two men argue, a player on the sideline initially tries to calm him down but it doesn't work; the coach continues his rant.

As the argument proceeds, the referee apparently throws a punch at the coach and as he backs up, the coach pursues him onto the basketball court where he catches up with the referee. In trying to avoid the coach, the referee is then attacked by people who storm the court. The brawl continues until the referee is on the court with the coach on top of him.

As the men are finally separated, the referee is seen walking out of the gym but is once again pursued and apparently struck as he is seen getting up from the ground again.

Names of the coach, the referee , and the teams were not reported by TMZ or several outlets.

TMZ also reported that police officers were summoned but by the time they arrived, the fight had ended. The police officers took a report for non-aggravated assault. The referee declined to press charges.

Sadly, referees getting attacked is not an outlier. It needs to be for everyone's sake.

Left to Right: Shaun Powell, Bill Russell, Lenny Wilkins and Jamal Crawford. Photo: Huntz Photograph

Remembering Bill Russell

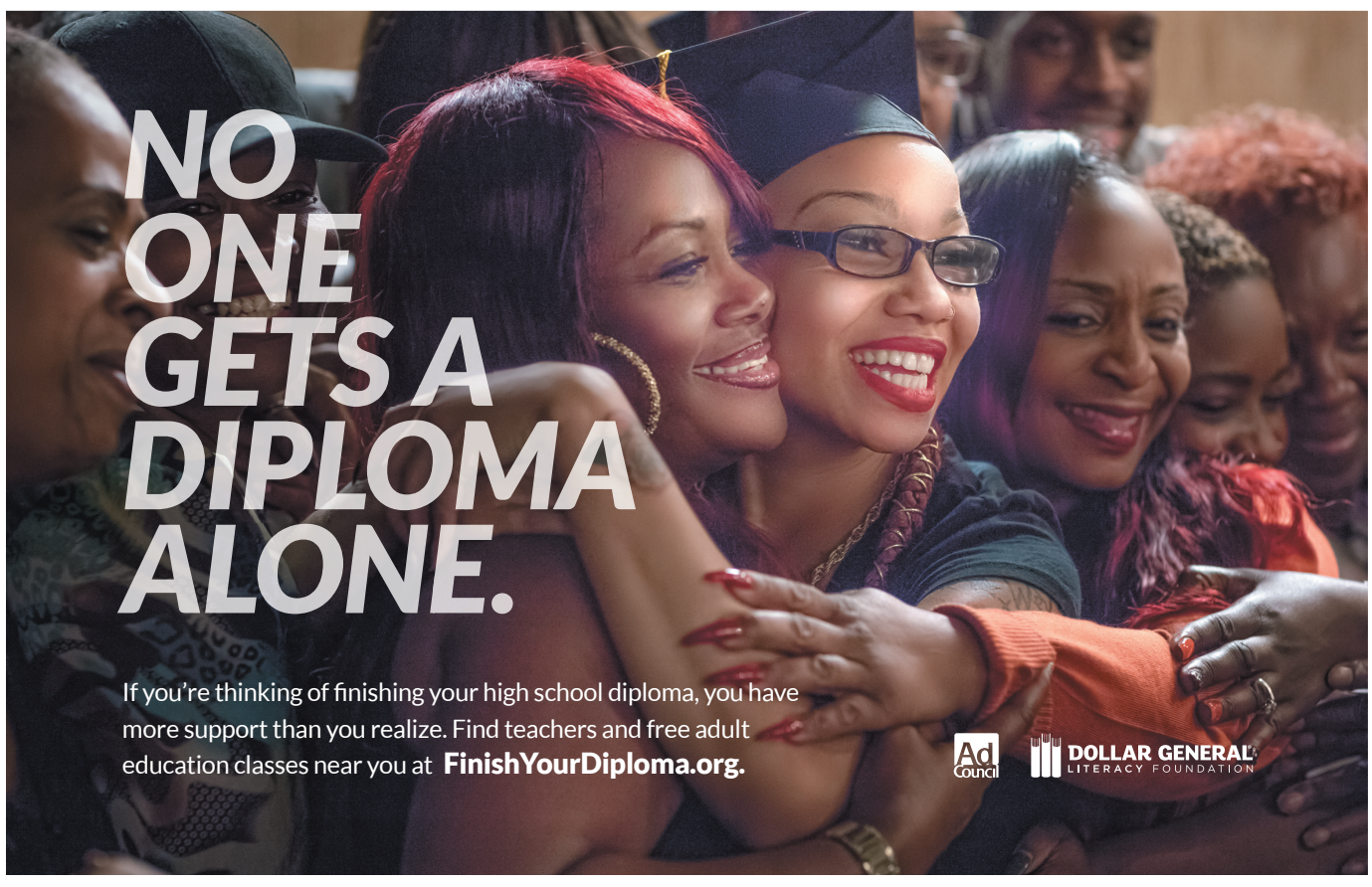
By Shaun Powell

"Bill Russell was a complicated man, and truthfully, we all have our complications. He has roots in the Deep South, raised in Oakland, became famous in Boston, and was a product of his turbulent era of the '50s and '60s. He stood for something, demanded respect, was a fierce competitor and had a strong sense of pride that was unshakable. He was fantastic to his teammates but aloof and moody and often standoffish in public. He couldn't be explained, not really, because unless you walked in his shoes — which was obviously impossible — you simply didn't know, as an outsider, what made him be who he was. All you could do was savor any fleeting moment you spent with him, if you were lucky enough to do so, and count your blessings.

Five years ago, I was in Seattle to catch Jamal Crawford's Pro-Am basketball games, which I've done for the last several summers. Well, I chose the right weekend: Bill Russell, who lived in Seattle, was in the gym. He sat with his wife at court side, by the scorer's table, and people left him alone as they began filing through the doors. Also, there that day was Lenny Wilkens, the great coach, whom I've known for a while, so Lenny and I struck up a conversation. "Hey Lenny," I said, "how about I get a picture of you and Jamal with Bill?" Lenny looked at me like I asked to borrow a million dollars. "You know what Bill's like," Lenny said, shaking his head. "And I'm not going to be the one to ask him. But I'll stand over here and see what happens when you ask."

Wisely, right before the games began, I went to his wife, told her the plan. She whispered something to Bill, and he grumbled, then she shook her head to me at first. Then she said, "well, I suppose it'll be OK if you just get the photographer to stand in front of Bill while he's sitting down." Basically, Bill Russell, the man who stood for something, wasn't standing for nobody. Then, I overheard her say to Bill, a bit sternly: "Oh, Bill, get up!"

So, the greatest winner in sports history stood up, a bit gingerly, and walked over to the empty bleachers a few feet behind him. I motioned to Lenny, who was amused by it all. Jamal came over. And I signaled for a photographer. Before the guy snapped the picture, he motioned for me to stand next to Bill. I guess the guy thought I was somebody. But it was the best advice I ever took.

And so that's the story of this photo. But the story of William Felton Russell, to be honest, can never be written. He was too great, too iconic, too complicated, too massive to fit in a book. RIP to a player I wish I had the chance to see."

Shaun Powell is a guest writer for the New York Beacon as well as senior writer/reporter at NBA.com TV.