

BLACK BY GOD

THE WEST
VIRGINIAN

FEBRUARY 15, 2023

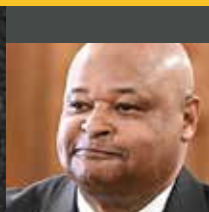
BLACKBYGOD.ORG



Making History

**Celebrate Black
West Virginians
who shape our state**

SPECIAL BLACK HISTORY AND LEGISLATIVE EDITION





Robert Duncanson (American, 1821-1872), *Landscape*, 1865, oil on canvas, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR

A new exhibit on display in the Clay Center's Juliet Art Museum, "More than a Passing Observation": William Louis Sonntag and Landscape Mania in the United States," explores paintings by William Sonntag and his peers; including landscape painter Robert Duncanson, the first African American artist to earn an international reputation.



William Notman (Canadian, 1826-1891), *Robert S. Duncanson, artist*, Montreal, QC, 1864, albumen print, McCord Stewart Museum

"More than a Passing Observation": William Louis Sonntag and Landscape Mania in the United States

We invite you to visit the Clay Center on Friday, February 17 at 5:30 pm as we present a panel discussion of historic landscape painting and issues of race in 19th century American art. Art historians Dr. Julia Sienkewicz, guest curator, and Dr. Wendy Casntenell, Assistant Professor at Washington & Lee University, will discuss Sonntag and Duncanson's working relationship. Using paintings and archival documents, Sienkewicz and Castenell will consider the status of race as an element of the careers of Sonntag, Duncanson, and other 19th century American artists.

In the exhibition, visitors will learn how "taking a view" in the 19th century could express ideas about self, society, and nationhood. The exhibition reconsiders Sonntag's role in the larger landscape painting tradition, including his

promotion of "western" landscapes along the Alleghenies, his transatlantic travel, and the status of race as an element of his career. The exhibit was curated by Dr. Julia A. Sienkewicz, Associate Professor at Roanoke College.

Admission to this event is free, and access to the exhibition in the Juliet Art Museum will be open for viewing before and after the panel. The discussion will take place in the Caperton Planetarium & Theater. This exhibit will be on display through March 19 and is included with admission to the Clay Center; \$12 for adults, \$8 for students and seniors, and children two years and under are free. To learn more about the Clay Center's offerings, please visit online at www.theclaycenter.org.

www.theclaycenter.org
304-561-3570



Special Black History and Legislative Edition

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ON THE COVER:
Black West Virginians
make history every
day.



Granny May, aka Sharon Satterfield, Dr. Turner and me at WVSU Black History Convocation.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dear Readers,

I am thrilled to bring you the February 2023 issue of Black By God, a celebration of Black History and its continued impact on our world.

The tradition of announcing visitors in newspapers has roots in early journalism, when newspapers were the primary source of information for communities. In keeping with this tradition, it is my pleasure to announce that Dr. William Turner recently visited West Virginia to share his knowledge and expertise on the contribution of Black Appalachians to the Civil Rights Movement. During his visit, he spoke in Welch and at WVSU and continued his book tour for "Harlan Renaissance." As Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alex Haley said, "Bill Turner knows more about black life and culture in the mountains of the American South

than anybody in the world."

While a full Black By God newspaper was not produced this time, I hope this magazine-style print gives you a glimpse into what a Black By God magazine could look like. Your feedback and support are greatly appreciated at crystal@blackby-god.org.

It's important to acknowledge Black newspapers' significance in American history and West Virginia's. Black newspapers have played a vital role in informing and empowering Black communities and continue to do so today. We are proud to carry on this legacy through Black By God.

Please donate to support our free publication. Follow us on social media and stay updated through our website for more exciting content and events.

~ Crystal

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We publish a bi-weekly newsletter and a quarterly print edition. Keep our content free and

innovative by donating and subscribing to Black by God. Thank you!



2023 Black Policy Agenda: West Virginia seeks justice and equality with Black Policy Day at State Capitol

Black leaders and allies gathered at the State Capitol on Feb. 15 to raise awareness on the pressing policy issues impacting Black West Virginians. The event gives a voice to the stories, experiences, and injustices the Black community faced and calls for collective action to create meaningful change.

“The policies being created in our state must reflect the needs and values of all its residents, especially the Black community,” said Katonya Hart, one of the event organizers. The coalitions supporting the event believe that it is only through collective action that progress toward a more just and equitable future can be achieved.

The event seeks to inform about the seven key policy areas of critical importance to the Black community, including criminal justice reform, healthcare, and

education. These areas were identified based on input from more than 200 people surveyed for the agenda and reflect the unmet needs and harm inflicted upon the Black community.

“Our agenda is not just a list of policy priorities, but rather a call to action for all West Virginians to come together and work towards a better future for all,” said Dr. Shanequa Smith, one of the event organizers. The coalition called for West Virginians to join the fight for justice and equality and to work towards creating a state where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of the color of their skin.

The Black Policy Agenda is by no means exhaustive but is a start centered on the social determinants of health and is a step toward change through awareness and action.

CROWN Act or Make it illegal to discriminate based on hair texture or style

This legislation was introduced in 2023 as HB 2092 with Delegate Walker as the lead sponsor. It has been referred to the committee on government organization, then Judiciary. There has yet to be any movement on this bill.

Contact: Delegate Phillips (Chair, Government Organization); Delegate Capito (Chair, Judiciary)

CROWN ACT PAGE 6

Economics

Regulating Allocation of Federal Funds to Counties and Local Municipalities

HB 3361 introduced by Delegates Rowe and Pushkin was modeled after The Tuesday Morning Group (TMG) Economic Justice, Fair & Equity Plan to allocate remaining American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds. The TMG plan aims to distribute \$300 million of \$678 million ARPA funds to local cities and counties based on the percentage of people living in poverty in West Virginia. These funds would support various projects.

The TMG suggests requesting a public hearing to explain why HB3361 does not contain the appropriate language to allocate funding to poverty census tracts and what the appropriate language should be.

Contact: The House Finance Committee Chair, Vernon Criss, amended HB 3361 to include the TMG Plan.

Create a Small Business and Minority Populations Economic and Workforce Development Task Force

This legislation was introduced as SB 256 with Senator Jeffries as the lead sponsor. The bill has been reported from

the Economic Development Committee and is sitting in Finance.

Contact: Senator Tarr (chair, finance)

Creating the WV Community Development Equity Fund

This legislation was introduced in 2023 as HB2202, with Delegate Hornbuckle as the lead sponsor. There has yet to be any action on this bill. It is referenced to Economic Development and Tourism, then Finance.

Contact: Delegate Howell (Chair, Economic Development, and Tourism); Delegate Criss (Chair, Finance)

THE BILLS

Actionable bills to follow and advocate to get on agendas

Criminal Justice

Eliminate restrictions on voting rights for formerly incarcerated individuals.

This legislation was introduced in 2022 as SB 488 with Senator Bill Hamilton as the lead sponsor.

The bill was reintroduced in 2023 as SB 235 with Senator Jeffries as the lead sponsor. The bill was debated in Judiciary but was not advanced to the floor.

Contact: Senator Trump (Chair, Senate Judiciary)

Health

Medicaid Buy-in: allowing those above Medicaid expansion eligibility to keep their coverage by paying a small monthly premium based on their income

This legislation was introduced in 2023 as HB 3274 with Delegate Worrell as the lead sponsor. It is referred to the committee on Health and Human Resources, then Judiciary.

Contact: Delegate Summers (Chair, Health); Delegate Capito (Chair, Judiciary)

Education

School suspensions to be considered excused absences

This legislation was introduced in 2023 as HB 2636, with Delegate Hanna as the lead sponsor. It is referenced by the committee on Education. There has been no action on this bill.

Contact: Delegate Ellington (chair, Education)

Racial Disparities in School Discipline

Black students are three to four times more likely than their white peers to be expelled or face multiple suspensions from school.



Risk of being expelled

Black



White

Risk of facing multiple suspensions



Source: U.S. Department of Education. Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2009-10; American Institutes for Research, www.air.org



CREATE A RESPECTFUL AND OPEN WORLD FOR NATURAL HAIR

Wheeling passes the Crown Act

A step toward a more inclusive West Virginia

BY CRYSTAL GOOD

Delegate Danielle Walker should be commended for her tireless efforts in introducing the CROWN Act (Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) year after year. Despite the lack of progress from the West Virginia Legislature as a whole, several cities, including Wheeling, are leading the way towards a more inclusive and diverse state by passing the CROWN Act. This bill, introduced as HB 2092 in 2023, outlines the prohibition of discrimination based on hairstyle or texture in schools, workplaces, and public spaces.

As the only Black woman serving in the West Virginia legislature, Walker is the bill's dedicated lead sponsor. Despite its introduction, the bill has yet to progress in committee, leading advocates to call for support from Delegate Phillips and Delegate Capito to ensure its passage.

The CROWN Act has already been

adopted as local ordinances in five West Virginia cities, with Wheeling being the latest to do so. City council members, human rights commissions, and organizations such as the NAACP are championing its adoption. Despite opposition from those who argue that it restricts dress codes and grooming policies, city council members firmly believe that passing this act aligns with the values of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and is the right thing to do.

Discrimination based on hair texture and style has a long history of being used to marginalize certain racial and cultural groups. The CROWN Act not only provides a crucial step towards creating a more equitable future for all in West Virginia, but also defines a new era of human rights laws against discrimination. This follows the lead of the 18 states and various municipalities that have already passed similar legislation.

On Feb. 15, supporters will gather

for the Crown Rally as part of the Black Policy Agenda to voice their support for the CROWN Act. This legislation addresses systemic racism and promotes racial equality by providing legal protection for Black individuals who have faced discrimination based on their hair. It is a necessary step towards creating a more inclusive and respectful society for all West Virginians.

The passing of the CROWN Act in Wheeling and other cities in West Virginia signifies a major step towards a more inclusive future. However, the support of state lawmakers is critical in providing this protection for all citizens. It is time for West Virginia to join the growing number of states and municipalities that have already passed similar legislation and to take a stand against hair-based discrimination. The CROWN act is a defining moment in the ending of discrimination, establishing a new era of human rights laws.

FIRST BLACK POLICY DAY: FEB. 11, 2022

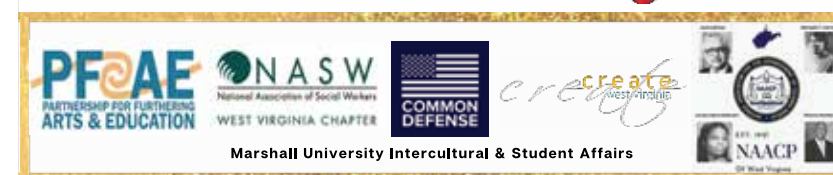
Last year, 13 organizations pulled together resources to support Katonya Hart, Dr. Shanequa Smith, and Crystal Good in bringing together more than 85 local leaders, students, organizers, folk reporters and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. members from across the state to learn and take action on the issues most impacting Black lives here in West Virginia. The work continues in 2023 as we seek to pass supportive legislation and to halt legislation that harms us.



PHOTOS BY LEESHIA LEE AND KYLE VASS



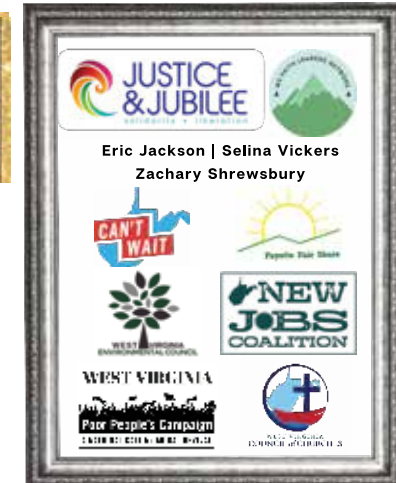
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Here are some of the contemporary Black members who have served in the West Virginia Legislature



Del. Clifton Moore Del. Sammi Brown Del. Arley Johnson Sen. Marie Redd

The hidden history of West Virginia's Black lawmakers

BY MYYA HELM

Too often, lessons of our politics include only the stories of white West Virginians. The whitewashed history of Appalachia has primarily become its legacy, silencing the Black lawmakers that have worked to create a place where Mountaineers are always free. More than two and a half centuries after statehood, Black political power is still subject to the oppressive, white-supremacist structure that serves to erase it. Being Black in Appalachia has been overshadowed by white political narratives to which we have all unknowingly accepted. Postbellum Appalachia is more than just what we have perceived through a white lens, and it's everyone's responsibility to recognize and explore the Black influence on West Virginian legislation and policy.

As southern West Virginia's Black population grew in the late 1800s, Black individuals began to carry more weight in an overwhelmingly white political system. It wasn't until 1896 that Christopher Payne, the first Black person to serve in the West Virginia legislature, was elected. From Payne onward, Black lawmakers in West Virginia have advocated for



Christopher Payne

social and racial justice. Payne began West Virginia's legacy of Black newspapers by establishing three of his own, bringing accessible information to marginalized Black communities. James Ellis, the second Black person elected to the legislature, played a vital role in revising West Virginia's educational system to increase student success to this day.



Minnie Buckingham Harper

Unsurprisingly, many of West Virginia's Black women were political trailblazers as well. In 1928, Minnie Buckingham Harper was appointed to the House, shattering the glass ceiling as the first Black woman to become a member of any legislative body in the United States. Harper's appointment reflected the growing importance of southern West Virginia's Black political coalition at the time. Elizabeth Simpson Drewry, the

legislature's second female Black delegate introduced several major bills from providing compensation for victims of black lung to amending the state constitution so that women could serve as jurors. The first Black person elected to the Senate was also a woman, Marie Redd, who began to serve in 1998.

Black history and hidden history should not be synonymous; Black history is West Virginia history. The progress made by our Black lawmakers is a groundbreaking element of what the Mountain State is today. Their fight to build a more just society and their spirit of public service alongside racial struggle depicts their true dedication to West Virginia, and their contributions deserve to be recognized. From Christopher Payne and Minnie Buckingham Harper to Sean Hornbuckle and Danielle Walker, Black Appalachian history continues to be made in front of our very eyes, and it is our job to break down the constructs used to erase Black power as well as to learn and teach about the presence and significance of West Virginia's Black lawmakers.

Myya Helm is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Studies at West Virginia University.



Del. Tal Hutchins Sen. Owens Brown Del. Charlene Marshall Del. Meesha Poore Del. Jill Upson



PERRY BENNETT/WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

Black delegates in the House are (from left) Caleb Hanna, Danielle Walker and Sean Hornbuckle.

REPRESENTING WEST VIRGINIANS

In the House of Delegates



West Virginia's only Black female lawmaker Danielle Walker (D-Monongalia) represents the 81st district, which covers Morgantown surrounding areas.



Sean Hornbuckle (D-Cabell) serves the 25th district, which includes Huntington.



Caleb Hanna (R-Nicholas) represents District 44, which serves Webster County and parts of Nicholas and Greenbrier counties.

Keeping it under control

The doorkeeper, a non-political position, announces special guests and messages, and with his team of assistants keep lobbyists and others without floor privileges out when in session.



Bishop Joe Thomas has served as Senate doorkeeper for 11 years.



Reverend Mahlon Dungey has served as Senate doorkeeper for 15 years.

CAPITOL FACTS: A SCAVENGER HUNT

As you explore the Capitol keep your eyes peeled. The Capitol is full of amazing sights. Below is a list of some of the things you can see and learn about the building.

The State Capitol has three floors and is divided into East and West Wings. This Fun Fact Tour has lots of great sites to see for everyone who is interested. If you are participating with your school, take a selfie with the answer to each question.

Ground Floor

1. At the West Wing's main entrance are the heads of Vesta, Roman goddess of heart and family; Neptune, God of the rivers; and Ceres, goddess of agriculture.

2. At the East Wing's main entrance are the heads of Mercury, who presides over commerce; Vulcan, celestial artist and architect; and Minerva, goddess of wisdom and the arts.

3. The Governor's Office is open and press conferences take place here.

4. The Hall of Governors between the Governor's office and the Rotunda has painted portraits of governors through the years.

5. The Rotunda is in the center of the first floor. Plaques on the walls tell stories of West Virginia's history.

6. With 56 years of service,

Robert C. Byrd holds the record as the longest serving senator in the United States Congress.

6. The Legislature has two chambers: Senate and House of Delegates. The Senate Chamber is in the West Wing and House Chamber in the East Wing.

Second Floor:

7. The Well is what we call the second floor under the dome that overlooks the Rotunda. It's a place where people who work with the Legislature come to hang out between meetings. The Dome was rebuilt in 1855; 293-foot tall (five feet taller than the dome of in Washington, DC); is covered in copper and gold leaf.

Third Floor

8. The West Virginia Supreme Court of appeals is located in of the east wing.

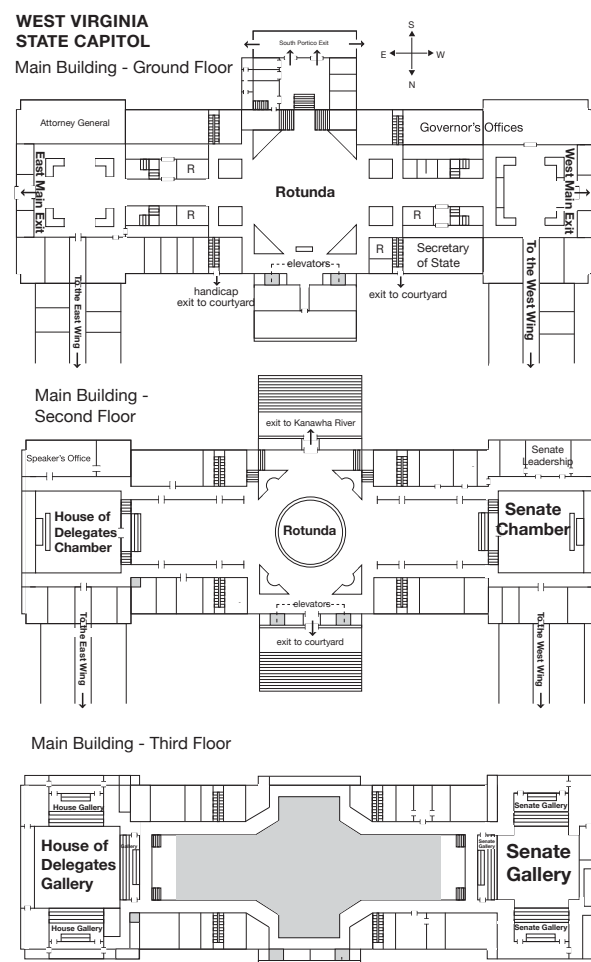
Carvings and Symbols:

Throughout the halls, there are carvings and symbols.

9. The Great Seal of West Virginia holds the motto Montani Semper Liberi meaning Mountaineers Are Always Free.

Statuary at the Capitol Grounds

10. There are 9 statues on the Capitol Grounds.



State Capitol Information

■ Building Hours

The Capitol is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday 12 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Sunday and Holidays.

■ Capitol Maps

Planning a visit? Download a Capitol map to help you navigate its grand halls at wvlegislature.gov

■ Access to Galleries

All citizens are welcome to observe legislative floor sessions from any of the three galleries located in each chamber.

■ Capitol Tours

State Capitol tours, and of the Governor's Mansion are available for guests, school groups, etc. Call Capitol Tours & Information – (304) 558-4839

■ Accessibility

All public entrances to the State Capitol are wheel chair accessible.

■ Food

The Capitol Complex Food Court is located in the basement of the main capitol building.

■ Shuttle Service

Shuttle service is provided between the Capitol Complex and the Laidley Field parking area.

During Black Policy Day, there's real scavenger hunt going on

Find a brochure at Black Policy Day and finish the tour to learn about the Capitol and how to advocate for your community.

■ Find the answers to the questions listed. You do not have to do them in order.

■ Take a selfie in that area or with the answer. Submit 5 selfies using the QR code on the brochure to enter into drawing for prizes.

Students:

■ Show your classroom teacher your total number of correct selfies to be entered into the master drawing. Must show 25 selfies DO NOT submit them.

HB2159

Community solar should be an option for Black families

BY LA'TONYA TROUTMAN

Our West Virginia legislature is considering HB2159, introduced by Delegate Hansen, to enable community solar in the state.

This Black History Month, I'm thinking not only about the history of Black communities but about our future, too. It's clear that clean energy like solar power is the future—but it can be inaccessible and expensive, especially to overburdened communities like mine. For instance, community solar is currently not available for everyone in West Virginia!

This is a problem that we can change. Community solar provides access to clean and affordable energy to communities historically underserved by the traditional energy industry. This is particularly important for Black communities, which have been disproportionately affected by the negative health and environmental impacts of fossil fuels. Community solar can help to reduce these impacts and provide a more sustainable energy source for future generations.



solarunitedneighbors.org

Community solar can also provide economic benefits, helping lower bills and prevent blackouts. According to a recent report by the group “West Virginians for Energy Freedom,” enabling community solar in our state would create thousands of new jobs, save ratepayers millions of dollars per year on electricity bills, and generate hundreds of millions of dollars in new solar sales.

solarunitedneighbors.org



ABC NEWS PHOTO

First Black woman to coach in Super Bowl is W.Va. native

From West Virginia to Super Bowl success: Autumn Lockwood breaks barriers as the first Black woman to coach in the big game. As an assistant sports performance coach for the Philadelphia Eagles, Lockwood has proven her talent and dedication to the sport. With roots in *Black By God* West Virginia and a career that has taken her from the University of Houston to the Falcons and beyond, Lockwood's historic Super Bowl appearance is a testament to her hard work and determination.

COOKIE TIME!

Black Diamond Council Troop 10465 started in January 2022 as a multilevel troop. They meet at Southmoor Hills Apartments in South Charleston, W.Va. Troop 10465 plans to use their earnings to support the Troop's needs of meals, uniforms, supplies and field trips, as well as learning how to run a business, work with others and have fun selling a popular product.



Visit Troop 10465's Digital Cookie® Store and order online!



WEST VIRGINIAN AFRICAN-AMERICAN ELITE
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PLAYERS IN THE**BIG TIME**

Both Alexis Hornbuckle and Renee Montgomery played on the 2002-2003 South Charleston Basketball Class AAA State Championship team.



Alexis Hornbuckle, above, was a standout player at the University of Tennessee, and also played for the WNBA.

Renee Montgomery is now vice president, part-owner, and investor in the Atlanta Dream.

Two were teammates
at South Charleston
High School

BY LEKILI DEAN

West Virginia is known for producing some of the best athletes in the country, including many talented women's basketball players. Two of the most notable professional players from the state are Alexis Hornbuckle and Renee Montgomery.

Alexis Hornbuckle

Alexis Hornbuckle is a former high school McDonald's All-American and standout player at the University of Tennessee, where she was a key member of the Lady Volunteers basketball team, winning National Championships in 2007 & 2008. Over her college career, Hornbuckle earned numerous honors, including All-SEC First Team, All-SEC Defensive Team, and SEC All-Tournament Team.

After college, Hornbuckle was selected fourth overall by the Detroit Shock in the 2008 WNBA Draft, where she played for several years and won WNBA Championships in 2008 and 2011. She has also played professionally overseas, competing in countries such as Russia, Turkey, and Israel.

Hornbuckle is known for her exceptional defensive skills, which have earned her the nickname "The Lock-down." Her competitiveness, athleticism, and hard work have made her one of the best defensive players in the game, and she continues to be a dominant force in the professional ranks.

Hornbuckle is currently a respected mental health coach and certified personal trainer.

Renee Montgomery

Renee Montgomery is a former high school All-American (South Charleston High School) and standout player at UConn, where she was a dominant force on the court and one of the best players in the country, winning a National Championship in 2009. Over her college career, Montgomery earned numerous honors, including All-SEC First Team, SEC All-Freshman Team, and SEC All-Tournament Team.

After college, Montgomery was selected fourth overall by the Minnesota Lynx in the 2009 WNBA Draft; Montgomery stacked up two Championships while a Lynx and was the first player in history to win a national NCAA Championship the same year as winning a WNBA Championship. She left an undeniable mark on the franchise and won WNBA titles in 2015 and 2017. Montgomery announced her retirement from the WNBA and opted out of the 2020



PHOTO BY CT MINIMAH WWW.CTMINIMAHSPORTS.COM

Rayana Breckenridge, West Side Middle School, left, and Zaniah Zellous, George Washington High School, right, are both successful on the court and in the classroom.

WNBA season in protest of police brutality. Her activism led to multiple campaigns dedicated to human rights and inspired the WNBA to focus on social justice initiatives.

She is now vice president, part-owner, and investor of the Atlanta Dream, as well as one of three owners of the FCF Beasts Indoor Football Team, making her the first player in the WNBA to become an owner and executive of a team and the first female owner in the FCF.

Adding more firsts for Montgomery is being the first person to be inducted into

UConn's "Hall of Honor" while being a current player and holding the record for playing the most games in the university's history.

West Virginia women's basketball players' success is a testament to their hard work, dedication, and competitiveness, and they continue to inspire many young players to pursue their dreams in basketball.

We got our eyes on Zaniah Zellous, George Washington High School, and Rayana Breckenridge, West Side Middle School, both successful on the court and in the classroom.



Honoring History

Julius Clancy Jr., the only Black player on Logan's roster, brings the ball up the court as Logan High School honors Black History Month and Aracoma High School legacy, Aracoma was the first Black school in Logan County.

The team revealed white and green uniforms with ARACOMA blazing across their chests — in contrast to the usual Logan colors of blue and gold.

RAY JUSTICE PHOTO

Notable West Virginia
women's basketball
standouts

Alexis Hornbuckle and Renee Montgomery are two of the most notable professional basketball players from West Virginia. But they are not alone.

- Ashley Battle, UConn
- Whitney Bays, Maryland/Purdue
- Candace Brown, Gardner-Webb
- Tiana Beatty, Charleston
- Kisha Burns, Clark Atlanta
- Taliah Cashwell, Wheeling
- Dahza Congleton, Marshall/Glenville
- Lynn Claytor, Sullivan
- Jordyn Dawson, Akron
- Denise Dennis, WVU Tech
- Aaliyah Dunham, Xavier/Marshall
- Dionna Gray, Kent State
- Alex Gray, WVU Tech
- Miki Glenn, Cal PA
- Brittany Gordon, Pitt
- Mychal Johnson, Notre Dame
- Mychelle Johnson, Marshall/Middle Tennessee State
- Anysa Jordan, WV State
- Janaue Taylor, Sullivan
- Keisha Tyler, Ohio
- Lisa Lee, Charleston
- Shay-Lee Kirby, Austin Peay/Youngstown
- Andriana Nazario, North Carolina A&T
- Kiana Evans, Marshall
- Natalya Sayles, WV State
- Shayntay Smith, South Alabama
- Rhea Smith, Santa Fe
- MacKayla Smith, WV State
- Rashaun Sayles, Okaloosa Walton
- Kristen Staples, Eastern Michigan
- Lavender Ward, North Country/Rio Grande
- Talequia Hamilton, Cincinnati/Marshall
- Valetta "Wee Wee" Johnson, Norfolk State
- ZZ Russell, WV State



Annual wine tasting with The Links

Miss Black Teen, 1976



Photography by WVU student Dayna Pratt

The Feels celebrates Black Women

In the tradition of Black newspapers having a society page dates back to a time when representation in mainstream media was limited, and Black communities relied on these newspapers to showcase their achievements and social events. This society page was a way of celebrating the success and social lives of prominent members within the community, and offered a glimpse into the “who’s who” of Black society. Today, this tradition is being carried on by creatives spaces like The Feels, a West Virginia-based Black women’s lifestyle media, in their curated exhibit of moments shared with “Black by God.” Through a modern lens, The Feels captures the essence of Black life and community. The Feels offers the millennial perspective of the society pages of Black newspapers. The Feels West Virginia provides a platform to highlight the joy, healing, and insight of Black experiences and celebrates the rich cultural heritage of West Virginia’s black community.



The Feels WV



thefeels_wv

#thefeelswv thefeelswv@gmail.com



Brianna and Kesner 09.03.21

Charleston City Council Member
Jennifer Pharr



Body positivity shot by Kaitlen Christian in Huntington



WVBP President Kasha Snyder-McDonald, left, and Vice President AJ Fleming publicly open the doors to the home of the West Virginia Black Pride Foundation.

WV Black Pride opens new home

Foundation brings hope and support to the Black LGBTQ+ community

BY LEKILI DEAN

The West Virginia Black Pride Foundation (WVBP) held its soft opening in Charleston Feb. 7, during Black History Month. The foundation aims to preserve, celebrate, and raise awareness of the contributions of African American LGBTQ+ individuals in the state and country.

President Kasha Snyder-McDonald and Vice President AJ Fleming led the event, opening the doors to the group’s new home.

WVBP is a nonprofit organization that started in December of 2022 to promote pride in the African American LGBTQ+ community and works to advance the rights of marginalized groups. With the donation of a building located on 3rd Avenue in Charleston, the organization now has a permanent home, which serves as a safe space for emergency stays. It includes a community closet, toiletry packs, and a food pantry.

The foundation plans to host events such as community cookouts, fashion shows, and parades in the coming year,



as well as a pageant to showcase the beauty, intelligence, and talent of Black LGBTQ+ individuals and raise awareness of the injustices they face. These events aim to bring visibility to the community and to share their stories and experiences in West Virginia.

Black LGBTQ+ individuals face even higher rates of discrimination than the general Black population, with a particularly low population in West Virginia. The WVBP is working to create a safe space and a sense of acceptance for this community. The organization also features a life liaison program, where individuals can seek support from a peer

in times of vulnerability.

Unfortunately, the fight for LGBTQ+ rights is ongoing. The West Virginia Legislature recently passed House Bill 2007, which bans medically necessary care for transgender children under 18. This law is one of many dangerous attacks on transgender youth and families led by far-right political extremists and anti-LGBTQ+ organizations fueled by disinformation.

Snyder-McDonald has been a pioneer in the LGBTQ+ community since the ’90s and continues to be a “Big Voice Box” for those who cannot speak for themselves. She and Fleming hope that the WV Black Pride will continue to make a positive impact in the Black and LGBTQ+ communities of Charleston for many years to come.

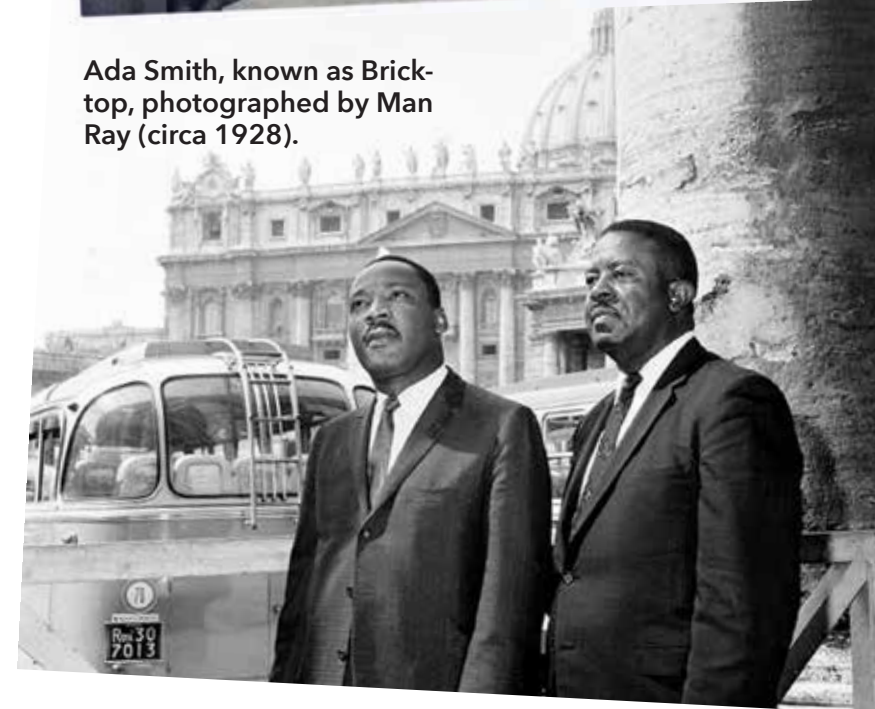
Snyder-McDonald and Fleming are voices and leaders, providing hope and support to those in need.

The new building is located at 1442 ½ 3rd Avenue, Charleston, WV 25302

Author Lekili Dean is Polynesian by nature, West Virginian by nurture



Ada Smith, known as Bricktop, photographed by Man Ray (circa 1928).



AP PHOTO

Civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., left, and his aide, Dr. Ralph Abernathy, right, enjoy a day off sightseeing at Saint Peter's Square, on Sept. 17, 1964, while visiting Rome, Italy, for an audience with Pope Paul VI.

The night the Appalachian Queen of café society fed MLK, Jr. in Rome

BY FRESH & FRIED HARD
freshandfriedhard.com

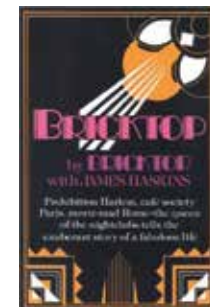
The date was September-something, 1964. Influence met influence. A peace-seeker and a woman reputed to be a hellraiser met up in Rome for an exchange that involved food and fellowship. Bricktop, or Ada Beatrice Queen Victoria Louise Virginia Smith from Alderson, West Virginia (where Martha Stewart was imprisoned) made the acquaintance Martin Luther King, Jr., formerly known as Michael King from Atlanta.

At seventy years old, Bricktop was 10 years older than the Reverend King's mother, Alberta. Since the 1920s, she had become famous for managing nightclubs eponymously named for her, throughout Europe and Mexico City. By the time Martin was born, Bricktop was running Chez Bricktop, one of Paris's hottest nightclubs. Her patrons wrote about her in prose (F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway) and song (Cole Porter). Coco Chanel's rival Elsa Schiaparelli dressed her. As did Edward Molyneux. She counted

Duke Ellington, Josephine Baker, Mabel Mercer and Maya Angelou as protégés. And, royals like the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, and King Farouk of Egypt enjoyed her company and friendship for decades.

Bricktop opened her last nightclub in Rome, where she retired in 1961. She continued to perform her cabaret act on occasion but most of her time was spent playing hostess to guests from around the world.

In the fall of 1964, The King was touring Europe on a goodwill trip, meeting with heads of state, including Pope Paul IV. While in Rome, he expressed interest in dining with Queen Bricktop. He wanted to take her to dinner. Miss Otis sent her regrets but invited the reverend and Ralph Abernathy to attend her birthday party or one of her many birthday parties, given her actual birthday was August 14. Ralph accepted on their behalf with the condition that they would have to leave by nine o'clock. Her response, "If you do, you won't get anything to eat. In Europe we don't eat before nine o'clock."



Bricktop's version of the events to follow was published in an excerpt from her autobiography, Bricktop by Bricktop, in the December 1983 issue of Ebony magazine.

Jet magazine (Oct. 29, 1964) featured a blurb about Bricktop's celebration in their "Cocktail Chit Chat" section. (The magazine refers to her by her married surname "DuConge.") The black-eyed peas were a hit, according to the mention. Among the guests documented were Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. Ralph Abernathy, pianist Charlie Beal (sic), members of the Toledo, Ohio chapter of Girl Friends: Kathryn Franklin, Doris Armstrong, Naomi Thompson, and Altoise Guy. Franklin, Armstrong, Thompson and Guy were accustomed to being featured in the society pages of Toledo newspapers, but this particular mention by Jet was special. Not only were they being entertained in the home of Bricktop, but they were treated every bit as treasured as Martin Luther King, Jr. If photos exist from the evening, they are in the personal collections of attendees.

One month after this dinner and the

WORLD
COCKTAIL CHIT CHAT When Rome's Ada (Bricktop) DuConge entertained for New York social worker Thelma Stackhouse, "not a single black-eyed pea was left". Among notables gathered in Brick's fashionable "attico" for the party were Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. Ralph Abernathy and pianist Charlie Beal, formerly of Chicago . . . Add to members of the Toledo (Ohio) Chapter of Girl Friends: Kathryn (wife of Municipal Judge Robert V.) Franklin, Doris (wife of Dr. Carl) Armstrong, Naomi (wife of Dr. C. Lancelot, Toledo U. associate professor) Thompson, and Altoise (wife of Dr. Fred, dentist) Guy.

✱ ✱ ✱
Jet Oct 29, 1964

completion of his European tour, Dr. King was hospitalized for exhaustion. During his recuperation, he learned he had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Within months of showing hospitality in Rome, Bricktop returned to the United States, residing in Manhattan. She passed away quietly in 1984, surviving her illustrious guest, Dr. King by 16 years.

For one brief moment in time, two of history's most fascinating royals met and ate together. And it's a bet, over a plate of black-eyed peas, they were just Ada and Mike.

Fresh & Fried Hard
A tribute to Black women and the power found in our kitchens. We will #citeblack-women and honor history and empower Black women.

The "Brain Drain"



Dissecting the WV Legislative Session 2023

Thursday, February 16, 2023 7:00 pm

Speakers:

Eli Baumwell

Advocacy Director & Current Interim Executive Director, ACLU-WV

Judy K. Ball

League of Women Voters of West Virginia

Register to attend at the following link:

<https://zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tJlqduyopzgqEtU1AgoGkdfR8XF4wvGiGzPW>





FRATERNITY BROTHERS HELP FACING HUNGER FOODBANK

Brothers of the Psi Beta Beta graduate chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. volunteered their Saturday morning at the Facing Hunger Foodbank in January. The chapter kicked it into high gear, helping prepare food boxes for distribution across the Huntington area and surrounding communities. The food bank partners with many organizations across West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio, serving over 130,000 annually. The chapter plans to work with Facing Hunger again in the near future.



FACING HUNGER FOODBANK
facinghunger.org

WHO IS HERBERT HENDERSON?

Herbert Henderson was a civil rights attorney from Huntington, West Virginia and served as a fighting force against Jim Crow with the **Civic Interest Progressives (CIP)**, a group of students at Marshall University who performed nonviolent protests to combat racial discrimination head on.

Henderson Served as **president of the West Virginia chapter of the NAACP for 20 years**. While acting as West Virginia NAACP president, Henderson worked in the judicial system acting as lead attorney for key cases involving equal opportunity employment, discrimination and desegregation.

To honor Herbert Henderson's work propelling the civil rights movement the West Virginia Office of Minority Affairs is named after Hebert Henderson, known as the **Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs**.

<https://jrclifford.org/west-virginia-heroes/>

BLACKBYGOD
THE WEST VIRGINIAN

BBG FOLK REPORTERS

A BLACK BY GOD THE WEST VIRGINIAN PROJECT

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Black By God I The West Virginian is a developing community-led journalism venture seeking to fortify our civic infrastructure.

BBG's Folk Reporters Program seeks citizens and civic actors, creators, and collaborators representing a broad base of inter-generational, diverse communities to explore the public meetings from City Councils to Public Service Commission meetings to the West Virginia State Legislature.



Follow on Twitter:
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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Health Disparities have been affecting African Americans in this country since arrival in 1619. We must improve health disparities in the black community for future generations.

TIMELINE OF SOME HEALTH DISPARITIES FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS





Four Black Historical Sites and Cemeteries in West Virginia

READ ABOUT West Virginia's historical sites and cemeteries and how they help tell the story of how the state has become what it is today.

READ US ONLINE BLACKBYGOD

THE WEST VIRGINIAN

Black By God is a community-led news organization based in West Virginia that aims to provide a more nuanced portrayal of the Black Experience in the Appalachian region. We seek to center Black stories and life in all their manifestations in West Virginia and Appalachia, providing coverage in four categories: civics, community, culture, and coin.

blackbygod.org



W.Va. Native and Ballerina Graces the Cover of People's Health Issue

Alicia Mae Holloway first came to the attention of Bachelor Nation fans on Season 25 of "The Bachelor."

She grew up in Mo and began dancing at age three, training at local dance studios.

READ ABOUT her career.



Dortehea Mollett writes about growing up in Black "By God" West Virginia
Snippets of My Life



LEARN TO BECOME AN ONLINE ADVOCATE

Speak loudly through your online platforms to ensure your representatives will hear how their policy decisions will impact your life — now and in the future.