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THE WEST
VIRGINIAN



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health to
the forefront

Juneteenth:
Celebration
and why we
remember

JUNE 16, 2022

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PRINT EDITION #4



WV Pride

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COVER PHOTO:

From left, back: Jamilia Price, Alia Haines, Jazmyn Price, Matriarch Kathy Lawson and Xavier Haines is center.

PHOTO BY KYLE VASS



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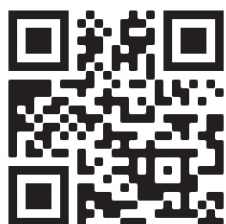


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Meet BBG reporter Kabrea James



Kabrea A. James is a journalist, artist and passionate light-worker from Beckley. She is a graduate from Marshall University, with a Bachelor's degree in Print Journalism and Creative Writing. Her website: Leuphorique.com

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Celebrating BBG

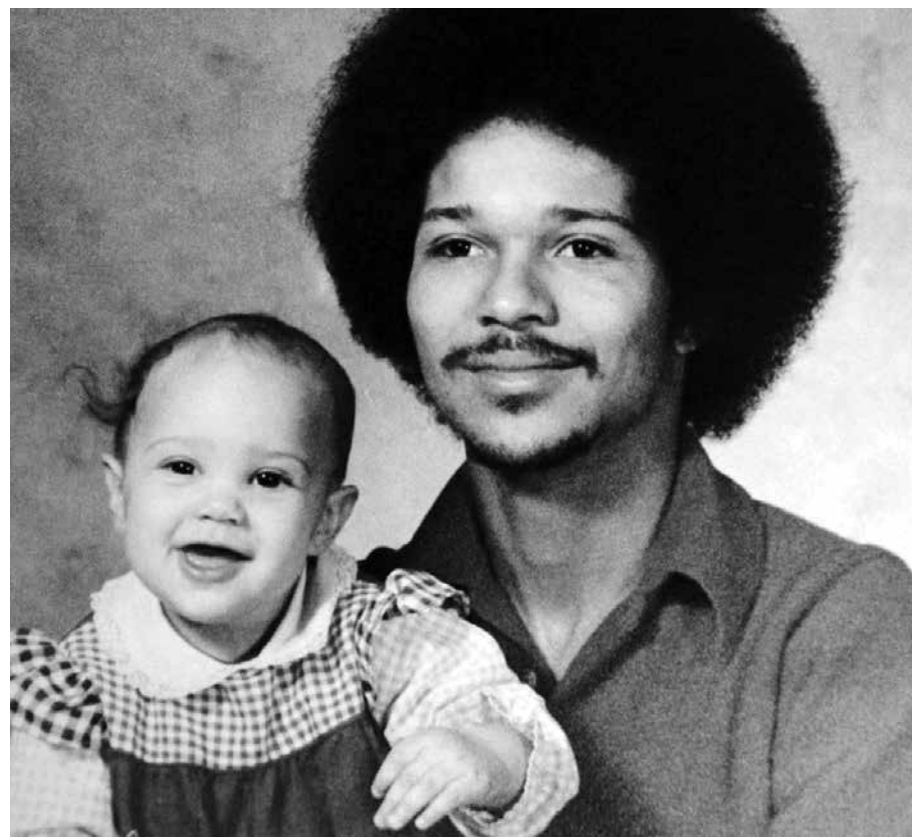
It's hard to believe it's been ONE year since BBG launched our first print edition. We have established a website BlackByGod.org, grown our newsletter subscriptions and social media audiences, and in a small way, announced to America that central Appalachia has a vibrant Black history, present, and, we believe, future. It's hard to know what chaos will flood our media at the

time of this print, but one thing I know, BBG is a celebration! We are here from Pride to Juneteenth, Fathers Day to West Virginia Day to almost summer! BBG is created and distributed by a caring West Virginia community in what I call a potluck of news mutual aid. From our writers, editors, cheerleaders, and readers, each issue is produced with many helping hands. I am thankful. It's been a long time since I was 16, and I asked my Dad to help me buy the last Black newspaper, the *Beacon Digest*,

to creating BBG. My Dad worked his way up from janitor at the news station to news director. It's a title held by few Black people in America. I get my nose for news, honest as they say! I love the story and look forward to celebrating BBG's story with you again and again.



Crystal Good



Wishing my Dad and all the fathers and father figures —
HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

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Joe Severino



Leeshia Lee

COMMENTARY

Giving our community a new, invaluable voice

BY LEESHIA LEE

Writing for Black by God has been such a necessary task. Not just because there is a need for it, but because it elevates thought. The way we perceive news in relation to us is, at times, just as it is presented to us: extensive when it is negative and rushed or hurried when it is something positive or enlightening. So, to have a hand in cultivating new stories that celebrate our accomplishments, expose our issues, and more importantly voice our concerns, is very necessary. When I first got involved, BBG was a grassroots effort looking for resources to expand, but actually it was — and still is — a resource giving the culture a chance to expand. From Crystal riding all over the state personally doing newspaper drop-offs to readers documenting her journey with posts and pictures of them and their copies, the initial issue of BBG was solidified.

The newspaper brings words to life. The newspaper gives a visual representation of a deeper meaning to our stories. The newspaper provides a gateway to change those narratives that no longer serve us. The newspaper creates a forum for opening doors so we can collectively gather in spaces demanding to be let in. Black Policy Day at the West Virginia

State Capitol drove African Americans in record numbers to the Capitol to share their stories — stories that have historically been overlooked or dismissed. Supporters took to the podiums to express themselves in a manner that unequivocally led to eruptions of applause. The cheers were documentations of voices being heard.

Black by God has become the grapevine of good news and community interest being reported with respect, paying homage and giving credit to those paving the way. The community supports the efforts of those who contribute to the paper and often celebrates the stories of their neighbors by engaging and sharing the work. The spotlights on Black business owners, black policymakers and black kids excelling provide a perspective into Black life in West Virginia that exemplifies a culture of educated, motivated and liberated individuals — not the backwoods stereotype that permeates the media. Being a part of something so powerful is a feeling that can only be captured by the next best thing, and that's a picture. Having my picture on a cover and throughout the magazine is one of my best memories.

We are no longer waiting in the wings to be possibly interviewed. Instead, we are crafting the stories that need to be told. Black by God The West Virginian is history in the making.

SPECIAL THANKS

Wes Armstead
Brian Canterbury
BBG Couriers
Alex Gallo
John Fe
Goldenseal

Leadership WV Class of 2022
Mountain State Media
Moth Man
Rachel Johnson
The Feels WV
Tiny News

Devyn Osborne
Vantage Ventures
WV Can't Wait Citizen Journalist Fellows
West Virginianville
Jennie Williams, WV State Folklorist
Ashley York



Game Changers annual group photo from their May 21 event in Charleston.

Game Changers builds boys' confidence, networking skills

BY LEESHIA LEE

To change the narrative of the community you must change the mindset of those in it. To create strong-minded, confident and motivated young men is the ultimate goal of the Game Changers — a collective of community leaders ranging from doctors, lawyers, pastors, legislators, city councilmen to directors, insurance agents, fathers, coaches and DJ's — all joined together May 21 in Charleston for the fourth year to celebrate the cultivation of young, impressionable minds.

The event's focus is to teach a generation that is accustomed to using technology to communicate effectively how to network and engage in conversation. The event kicked off with a human scavenger hunt, in

which the boys must interact with the mentors to find out more about them. This confidence-building exercise teaches the boys a life skill while rewarding them with gift cards and trips to the prize table. Prize and gift cards were donated by sponsors and community members who believe in the importance of the event.

While attendees enjoyed each other's company and fellowship, this year's event turned competitive when a dance battle between the ages was initiated by the youth. The "new school" did not back down and chanted to their older counterparts that they were "overrated!" The "old school" returned the intensity by reminding the youngsters that they have paid their dues, chanting back "graduated!" The actual winner of the dance battle is still up for debate as both sides sent their best dancers forward to cap-

ture the crown.

The belief that the young men have bright futures ahead of them was reinforced when the Xi Alpha Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. proudly awarded Elijah Lee Poore as the Quewanncoii C. Stephens, II Annual Scholarship recipient and presented him with a \$1,000 check. Yvonne Sherri Lee, founder of Charleston's Cam's Creations, also did a raffle for attendance and gave away a \$500 scholarship in honor of her son.

Everyone who showed up to the event walked away a winner. Plenty of pictures were taken and unforgettable memories were made but most importantly, bonds were formed that helped provide a lifetime of knowledge on how to move in a room full of bosses.



ABOVE: Mizaiah Harris collects his prize from W.Va. Sen. Richard Lindsay after winning the networking scavenger hunt.

LEFT: A father listens attentively as his son gathers information from Mentor Hollis Lewis.

CENTER: Tony Rush engaged in conversation with Stuart Frazier about the many professional hats he wears.

“God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” — Genesis 2:2-3

The Gospel of Rest

“Work, work, work, work, work, work. . .” — Rihanna

BY BUNMI KUSIMO

Rest is so important that it appears in the second chapter of the Bible. Rest is a sacrament. Rest is magical. Rest is how we tap into physical wisdom — our inherent gifts and talents that make us who we are.

Much of the power, prayers, and philosophy of the practice of hoodoo stem from the Bible. The Bible is the book our African American, and African (cough, colonization, cough, slavery, cough), ancestors used to do their magic. Psalms 23 is a foundational spell in hoodoo. While society often attempts to separate culture from practice, for those of us in the African Diaspora they are intertwined. The prophesying, shouting, dancing, hand-laying, prayer closets in our world are African traditions that we as a culture have effortlessly brought into Christian traditions. As the daughter of an African-Christian preacher I've seen this first-hand my entire life (church three-plus times a week adds up over the years) and I know the Bible better than most.. So now let's talk The Gospel of Rest.

You resting?

Are. You. Resting?

The answer, likely, is no. Our culture is inundated with an unhealthy obsession with work. Late-stage capitalism has us all thinking we need to hustle or die, rise and grind, work harder than everyone else, be an entrepreneur and have a 9-to-5, and we are working ourselves into early graves. The life expectancy for African Americans continues to

lag other ethnic groups, largely due to a cultural expectation and celebration of us working ourselves to death.

This Juneteenth I wanna talk about John Henry and how the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves can spell life or death.

According to legend John Henry was a steel-driving man. A steel-driving man was someone who was tasked with hammering a steel drill into rock to make holes for explosives. (So hard, hard work.) There are beautiful statues of him in Talcott and Hinton, West Virginia — John Henry is that important to our history. Now why is our beloved ancestor John Henry so lauded? Because he worked himself to death trying to outpace a machine.

John Henry was strong. As strong as WE get, and we know that's a big, strong, black man. Somehow someone decided to set up a race between John Henry and a new-fangled, steam-powered rock drilling machine.

And being a proud black man, he agreed.

He won — then immediately died.

I'm not going to tell this story in detail the way it has been told in lore. You can find his story all over. My point is different from the one normally told.

“For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?” (Jesus) Mark 8:36 (ASV).

We are giving our lives in exchange for showing that we are worthy — and we get applauded for it. And I'm saying, it's not necessary. This was forced upon us. This is generational trauma, the legacy of slavery, of Jim Crow, of forced segregation, of being made to feel as though we are a problem rather

than an asset-playing itself out in real time.

While we love John Henry (Ase) and we honor all our ancestors who worked themselves to the grave to help create the economy, our society, to create life, to create us, the best way we can honor their legacy is to move beyond this idea that we are chattel, that our value comes from our labor. This is a false premise. Our value comes from ourselves, our authentic selves.

“Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not be afraid; you are worth more than [a whole flock] of sparrows.” (Jesus) Luke 12:7

“Is it not written in your Law, I said, you are gods?” (Jesus) John 10:34

For us black folk, this idea of rest and making space for rest, is personal and political. Many of us came to this country as enslaved people, forced to create the wealth of this country, while receiving only scars in return. Our value came from what we could produce, and that is how many of us are still viewed and view ourselves. We are conditioned by a society that praises what we do, rather than the universal truth that there is inherent value in the fact that we exist.

Rather than treat rest as sacred and make true time for it, we run ourselves ragged proving our importance by doing, doing, doing — and lying to ourselves by telling ourselves that all this doing is rest. It is not. Most of us stay so busy, we don't know what our inner voice sounds like, and we'd be shocked to hear our inner voice is a taskmaster that keeps us on a treadmill of DOING not BEING. We live for a future that has not yet come — and run from a past that no longer exists.

I'm saying we need a paradigm shift. We free now. You'll find that there is praise and glory in rest and once you get some real rest you will be closer to your God. But this runs counter to society's narrative. You gotta experience true rest

Continued on page 9



JUNETEENTH CELEBRATIONS ARE EMPTY SYMBOLISM WITHOUT REPARATIONS

BY JOHN KEMET SHABAZZ EL

Founding member, West Virginia Blackunity Coalition

Greetings, Black by God readers,

Admittedly, I am not a reparations scholar. However, we in the WV Blackunity Coalition have advocated reparations for Blacks in West Virginia and throughout the United States, where we find gross race-based wealth disparities that have been ingrained and ignored for decades. It is the Blackunity Coalition's assertion that reparations are a critical economic step to enfranchising Black families, whose wealth has been drained from them for hundreds of years because of laws and policies that disenfranchised them, causing them to earn less money, pay more for goods and services, and keep them poor and lacking in every aspect of American life.

On April 23, 2011, WV Blackunity Coalition hosted the National International Day of Action and Unity at the Salvation Army in Morgantown. Featured speakers at this town hall were Queen Mother Amy Rose Parks, Sis. Lajuana Logan, myself and other local community activists and speakers. At this time, we announced on the record that we were in support of reparations for slavery and ending gentrification in the West Virginia Black community and other Black communities across the United States.

In June 2011, we organized and hosted the first Juneteenth celebration in Fairmont at historic Windmill Park. After a decade of advocating host-

ing, and institutionalizing the Juneteenth celebration, the Fairmont City Council approved a resolution during Black History Month that declared Saturday, June 19, 2021 Juneteenth Day in the city of Fairmont. We believe that through our collective efforts we have helped create increased awareness of the Juneteenth celebration in the Upper Monongahela River Valley. However, increased awareness is not enough. There must be JUSTICE. There must be a system of making amends for the wrongs done to Black Americans.

Reparations ARE justice.

A sanctioned Juneteenth celebration is little more than empty symbolism if it does not include a constant demand for direct action appropriations for home ownership, farms, healthcare facilities, and small business development out of the yearly annual budgets of de facto colonial authorities and corporations.



A book that helped me chronicle and place reparations movement into context is "Should America Pay? Slavery and the Raging Debate on Reparations" by Dr. Raymond Windbush. I continue to use Dr. Windbush's book as a historical guide for past examples where reparations have been and are being paid. Windbush's book also details the writings and direct advocacy of early reparations warriors like Queen Mother Moore of the Republic of New Afrika, and later James Forman's "Black Manifesto" (1969), a demand to white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues to pay reparations to the descendants of enslaved Africans in America. I encourage readers to explore these pieces of nonfiction that explain more about why reparations ARE truly the meaning of justice for us.

For us, reparations are economic justice, and must be on the agenda. The ancestors demand

Continued on page 9

REPARATIONS from page 8

justice and some land to grow healthy food and build a reality of our own under God's law.

In 2021, West Virginia delegates Kayla Young (D-Kanawha) and Danielle Walker (D-Monongalia) introduced House Bill 2878, which would have established a task force to study and develop reparation proposals for Black Americans.

Upon request for comment regarding possible re-introduction of the 2021 WV Reparations Study Commission Bill, Delegate Kayla Young stated, "I do plan to re-introduce the Reparations Study Commission Bill HB2878, if I am re-elected to the House of Delegates. If I'm not re-elected I hope other members of the House or Senate will introduce the bill. I think it is a good starting point for the reparations conversation in West Virginia, one I'm sure that has not been had by Legislators at the Capitol in some time."

Young said that before she introduced the bill she spoke to the Black members of her caucus, Delegates Hornbuckle and Walker. She said she knew the bill may cause some media attention and they would likely be questioned about it as the only Black Democrats in the House.

The bill received no such attention.

Young, who shared her comments via email said, "Unfortunately, I don't imagine much of the aforementioned legislation (referring to the Reparations Study bill, Crown Act and Minority Tax Credit legislation) will be considered by the House next session.

She said, "The supermajority hasn't had much of an appetite for legislation that protects or empowers vulnerable populations."

Delegate Walker, who co-sponsored the bill offered a more sincere explanation of the need for the Reparations Study Commission.

"If Juneteenth is a consensus, then reparations can be too. West Virginia teaches a narrative that it was an-

ti-slavery but in contrast West Virginia held 5 to 7 percent of its population in bondage. The Reparations Study Commission would develop a study report to detail West Virginia's role in slavery and indentured servitude. It's time to take responsibility and understand West Virginia's role in American slavery. It starts with the courage to say, 'reparations.' I will do my part to keep advocating for this important knowledge."

The purpose of the bill was to establish a task force to study and develop reparations for African Americans and provide that West Virginia level reparation actions that are undertaken as a result of this article are not a replacement for any reparations enacted at the federal level.

The bill didn't make it into committee to start the debate. It was referred to the House Judiciary Committee, which did not take it up. However, we must continue to advocate for reparations, to study and apply successful national liberation and reparations models and formations wherever and whenever possible.

This Juneteenth we know that the bondage of oppression did not end with Juneteenth. Reparations is the next stop on the Juneteenth path toward true racial equity in the United States of America.



John Kemet Shabazz
El is the founder and
producer of THE SHABAZZ
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Respectful commentary
may be sent to

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If you would like to donate to

THE SHABAZZ REPORT, Cash App \$John-

Shabazz. Much appreciation and return

blessings to those who donate.

For a list of reference reading and
information on reparations for slavery, read
this story on blackbygod.org

GOSPEL OF REST from page 7

to have that experience. If we as a people start to prioritize rest, prioritize idleness, we will find that rest is what makes room for expansion. Rest is what allows the body to heal (and makes room for us to listen to what our body is trying to tell us). Rest is how we create the fertile ground that will allow for us to thrive. From rest we can cultivate beauty. From beauty we can cultivate joy. From joy we can create a life that is fulfilling for ourselves, rather than one defined by the value that others place on us.

Let's cultivate a practice of real rest. Of not going anywhere; of sitting around doing nothing; of creating, just for the sake of creating; consuming art just for the sake of consuming art; reading, meditating, sleeping, bathing — fully indulging yourself, for yourself. Taking time to listen to your inner voice. What is it saying to you about you and how you must move in the world? Would you value yourself the same if you lost everything you have today? Have you put yourself in mental slavery beholden to the idea that you are only as good as your last accomplishment?

Do you have a day that you set aside once a week for you? A day with no obligations? A day where you do exactly what you want to do and not what you have to do or are expected to do? I specifically do not mean a day where you attend church, or go to your kids' ball games, or do anything for anyone. Having a super-packed, super-busy, no-days-off schedule is another way of keeping the masses in bondage, and prevents us from having the space to dream. You don't have to outpace the machine. We free now. Massa doesn't set your schedule unless you let him. Happy Juneteenth.

I sincerely mean, Do you have a free day, to do nothing, and then you DO NOTHING. You don't clean. You don't work in the garden, on your home, for others, for yourself or your business, or go anywhere — you rest. You sleep. You be.

If we are wonderfully and beautifully made, (Psalms 139:4) then we need not run ourselves into the ground working, trying to prove our value to the world. A rose doesn't go around doing things to add value to our lives. A rose contributes by being itself. By being beautiful, by waving in the breeze, and opening to the opportunities (the bees!) that come its way.

"In vain you rise early and stay up late, tolling for food to eat — for he grants sleep to those he loves." Psalms 127:2

We must treat rest as a sacrament. This is divine order. Treat rest as though it is as necessary to your life as eating and breathing and you will experience expansion like you've never seen before. You are not bound by the scars of your ancestors. You can heal generations through your actions. Make room for rest and you will open the doors to living your truth. Once you do that, your contributions will come from your inherent gifts. It won't be forced. It won't be a grind. You won't have to work to death. You will shine and have value just as you are.

Love,
 B

JUNETEENTH:

The remembrance of humankind's opposition to freedom and justice

BY THE REV. DR. DOROTHY SANDERS WELLS

On June 15, 2021, the U. S. Senate voted unanimously to make Juneteenth a federal holiday. Following a 2020 in which our nation saw the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in the midst of a global pandemic, the Senate's 2021 vote responded to a need to create a holiday to acknowledge the emancipation of black persons on this soil.

But the choice of Juneteenth as the date to commemorate the emancipation of enslaved black persons seems to be a questionable one, and too many Americans who don't really know history seem to be under the false impression that Juneteenth marked the true end of slavery in this country.

That notion is not true. There were still slaves — legally-held slaves — after Juneteenth.

So why did our nation's lawmakers choose that date to recognize emancipation?

Let's start with a bit of history. Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, perhaps a questionable but certainly effective use of his wartime powers, declared freedom of enslaved persons in the rebelling (Confederate) states effective January 1, 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation was only effective in those rebelling states; slavery in Union states and four border states (Missouri, Kentucky, Delaware and Maryland) was not affected by the Proclamation. In one of the rebelling states — Texas — news of the emancipation of 250,000 slaves was apparently deliberately suppressed. Juneteenth marks the arrival of Union forces in Texas on June 19, 1865, bearing the news of emancipation — 2½ years after the Emancipation Proclamation, and two months after the end of the Civil War. The intentional suppression of the news of emancipation from enslaved persons in Texas may also explain why it appears from census records that slaveholders from other states actually fled to Texas with their slaves after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued — to ensure that the enslaved persons would continue to be enslaved.

That slavery held an economic stronghold on this

country which seemed to overcome any religious or moral sensibilities seems evident. Scholar David W. Blight, Professor of American History at Yale University, has been quoted by Ta-Nehisi Coates as stating that "by 1860, there were more millionaires (slaveholders all) living in the lower Mississippi Valley than anywhere else in the United States. In the same year, the nearly 4 million slaves on American soil were worth some \$3.5 billion, making them the largest single financial asset in the entire U.S. economy, worth more than all manufacturing and railroads combined." That fact certainly might explain the suppression of the news of emancipation to enslaved persons in Texas for 2½ years. Perhaps the surprise is that there weren't even more states in which the truth of emancipation was suppressed.

While most non-rebelling states did act to end slavery after 1863, legal slavery continued until it was abolished by the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution on December 18, 1865. Delaware and Kentucky, having voted not to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, were, of course, still subject to it after its ratification; enslaved persons in both states were free in December 1865. Neither state formally voted to ratify the Amendment until 1901 and 1976, respectively. But those two states were not the last to formally ratify the Thirteenth Amendment; that "honor" is held by the state with the largest population of slaves in 1860 — Mississippi. And Mississippi did not vote to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment until 1995 (though through some error, the vote to ratify was not communicated to the National Archives, and was not recorded until 2013.).

It is important to note that for two territories that sought statehood in the midst of the Civil War — West Virginia and Nevada — statehood was conditioned on emancipation. West Virginia was the first state to be entered into the United States as a state in which there would be no slavery; Nevada became the second. And, both new states voted promptly to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment — West Virginia, on February 3, 1865, and Nevada, on February 16, 1865.

For whatever reasons we choose to commemorate

Juneteenth, it should be abundantly clear that we are not commemorating the end of slavery. But Juneteenth is a date to commemorate: It speaks not only to the suppression of the truth of emancipation to enslaved persons in Texas, but to all of the unfulfilled promises of Reconstruction, when Black people believed that emancipation would have meaning. Instead, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution that abolished slavery, granted citizenship, afforded due process, and guaranteed the right to vote to African persons on this soil gave way instead to a legacy of segregation and Jim Crow laws that mandated separation — separate schools and learning, separate neighborhoods, separate entrances into public buildings, separate seating on public transportation, separate public accommodations. Race massacres — from Memphis, in 1866 to Tulsa, in 1921 — saw the destruction of Black-owned homes, businesses, schools and houses of worship. After the election of the first Black Senator and Congressmen — all from the South, during Reconstruction — voting rights were suppressed, and many brave and faithful persons gave their lives just in order for Black persons to be able to cast their votes in public elections, a right that was given in the Fifteenth Amendment. Those who would empower themselves to be judge, jury and executioner lynched Black persons with impunity during the 19th and 20th centuries — at what were too often spectator events. Whatever we may have hoped of emancipation, emancipation was not freedom.

Juneteenth was not freedom.

Indeed, for all who still live in the shadows, the margins and underserved communities, for all who continue to be discriminated against, for all who continue to be profiled and unjustly accused, for Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, for nine persons whose lives were taken in Charleston's Emanuel A.M.E. Church, for ten persons whose lives were taken in a Buffalo grocery store, Juneteenth becomes a day of remembrance of and mourning for all of the ways in which humankind has stood in opposition to freedom and justice.

AN OPEN LETTER CONCERNING MASS SHOOTING IN BUFFALO, N.Y.

The Charleston Black Ministerial Alliance family extends our deepest sympathy to the Buffalo mass shooting victims and their families. In the aftermath of the most recent mass shooting, we are troubled with grief, outrage, frustration, and reflection.

As a nation, we have endured gun violence repeatedly resulting from the actions of racist individuals' intent on killing and harming others.

This senseless violence must end. The loss of any life, especially in this manner, strikes us at the core of our being. Our message is that the time has long passed for a sensible,

meaningful conversation about gun-related violence in the United States

So many lives are tragically changed forever because of these people who could care less for the sanctity of our lives. We do not know how to fix the problem of mass shootings, but we do know one thing, which is to get on our knees and start praying for our people and our country. Never has prayer been more critical than now. God, please help every one of us.

Rev. Roberta Smith, President
Charleston Black Ministerial Alliance Inc.,
charlestoncbma@yahoo.com

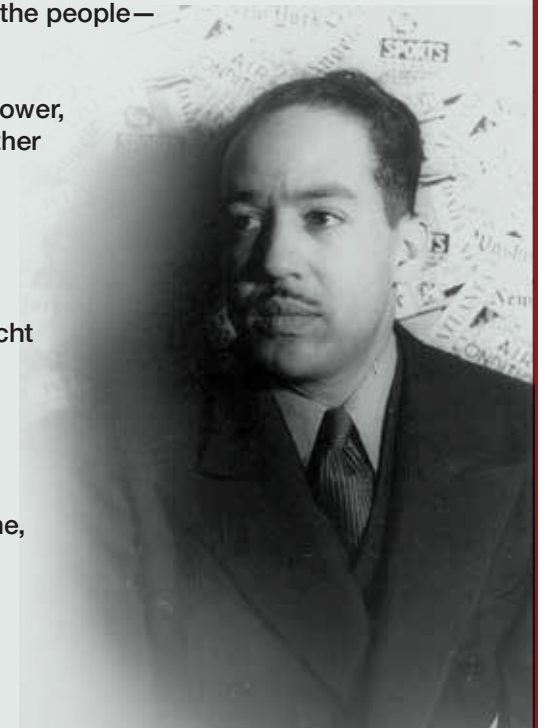
IN MEMORY OF ALL THE KIDS WHO DIE FROM SENSELESS GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA.

KIDS WHO DIE

This is for the kids who die,
Black and white,
For kids will die certainly.
The old and rich will live on awhile,
As always,
Eating blood and gold,
Letting kids die.
Kids will die in the swamps of Mississippi
Organizing sharecroppers
Kids will die in the streets of Chicago
Organizing workers
Kids will die in the orange groves of California
Telling others to get together
Whites and Filipinos,
Negroes and Mexicans,
All kinds of kids will die
Who don't believe in lies, and bribes, and contentment
And a lousy peace.
Of course, the wise and the learned
Who pen editorials in the papers,
And the gentlemen with Dr. in front of their names
White and black,
Who make surveys and write books
Will live on weaving words to smother the kids who die,
And the sleazy courts,

And the bribe-reaching police,
And the blood-loving generals,
And the money-loving preachers
Will all raise their hands against the kids who die,
Beating them with laws and clubs and bayonets and bullets
To frighten the people—
For the kids who die are like iron in the blood of the people—
And the old and rich don't want the people
To taste the iron of the kids who die,
Don't want the people to get wise to their own power,
To believe an Angelo Herndon, or even get together
Listen, kids who die—
Maybe, now, there will be no monument for you
Except in our hearts
Maybe your bodies'll be lost in a swamp
Or a prison grave, or the potter's field,
Or the rivers where you're drowned like Leibknecht
But the day will come—
You are sure yourselves that it is coming—
When the marching feet of the masses
Will raise for you a living monument of love,
And joy, and laughter,
And black hands and white hands clasped as one,
And a song that reaches the sky—
The song of the life triumphant
Through the kids who die.

— Langston Hughes



ANTHONY WILES

A new voice in the Affrilachian Poets

BY ANTHONY WILES

I am a descendant of the knowns and the unknowns — whose stories I seek to tell. I am a member of the Black West Virginia diaspora and am a proud ninth-generation Appalachian. From down in the foothills of North Georgia, to the hollers of Southern West Virginia, to the Blue Ridge iron plantations of antebellum Virginia, and now in the long-faded smoke and everlasting river valleys of Pittsburgh, my people have made their home across this region for over 200 years.

I carry their spirit of resilience, hard work, and commitment to family, as much as I carry my love for this place — my home — in my heart and in my art. It is their stories, passed down from the elders in my family, as well as my complicated relationship with this place and my place in it — the love, the hate, the isolation, and the belonging — that fuel me to create.

I first began writing poetry in eighth grade. Though I've always had a love for writing, especially in the creative realm, I'd never found poetry an accessible art form, nor was it a genre in which I found much representation. Now, as I am about to graduate high school and embark on my collegiate years, I have two very distinguished poetic honors under my belt.

In August of 2020, I was appointed one of five National Student Poets — the nation's highest honor for youth poets presenting original work. In this program, which is sponsored by the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers and the federal government's Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), I served as an ambassador of poetry — speaking on panels, teaching workshops, writing pieces, and being featured on podcasts, for example. During this enriching and life-changing experience, I had the opportunity to meet and work with two of my

poet mentors/inspirations: Frank X. Walker and Black By God's very own, Crystal Good.

However, it is with great pride and a healthy degree of still-lingering shock, that I announce that I am officially a member of The Affrilachian Poets! To say that this is a dream come true, would be an understatement deserving of literary admonishment. I can easily say that this is the highest-honor I've ever received, and to be amongst the poets that helped make me into the artist I am today, is truly a blessing.

When I entered high school, I was an amateur poet unsure of my craft, feeling as though I didn't have a story worth telling — or one other artist could relate too. Though I'd had some exposure to Black poets, there weren't really any telling stories like my own — telling stories of coal-mining great-grandfathers and memories of misty mountain Augusts I felt like an anomaly, because although I'd grown up with a sense of pride in my Appalachian heritage, I'd never seen it celebrated in the literary world, let alone by Black writers. In the place of embrace, I often found callous stereotypes and benign yet hurtful surprise in my proclamations of my Blackness firmly rooted in my Appalachian heritage.

This wasn't until I turned to Google and the advice of a former English teacher, who has supported me through every step of my journey. When I discovered The Affrilachian Poets, a grassroots collective of poets of color from across Appalachia, I felt as if I had truly discovered poetry, real storytelling. To see myself reflected, both as an artist and as a human, opened my eyes to the beauty of poetry as an art form, one in which I could tell and celebrate my story. An art form in which I could uplift the voices of those who came before, find victory and peace in my troubles, and discover my place in a place



we went Home to Crystal

we ate

fried chicken: from the krogers in bluewell

collard greens and cornbread-on blue paper plates

vanilla pistachio cake and tooth-ache lemonade

in the basement of that little wooden church called Pilgrim.

this was my first time coming Home.

the creek was polluted, the mines were abandoned

we were good eating and Lord praising

i was Home, i was safe

they knew me and they loved me

i belonged to them

and them mountains

Crystal, West by God Virginia

i knew only in memories long gone and never mine.

That Sunday,

we went Home to Crystal

About the poem:

I wrote "we went Home to Crystal" in a writing workshop back in tenth-grade. Though the poem itself veered far from the expected prompt of the workshop (my original copy is marked in red ink with numerous comments from my instructor), I kept it unchanged. This poem was part of my portfolio that led to my appointment as a National Student Poet, and is one of my most beloved poems. Short and succinct — which is not something I do often as a writer — this poem tells the story of my first time going to my maternal family hometown of Crystal, a former coal camp in Mercer County, West Virginia.

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About the author:

Anthony Wiles is an 18-year-old artist and activist, and a ninth-generation Black Appalachian based in Pittsburgh. His family tree spreads across the Mountain South, with deep roots in Virginia and West Virginia. He tells stories of space, place, belonging, history, and survival, both as a way to honor his ancestors and make sense of the world and his place in it. A member of The Affrilachian Poets and a former National Student Poet, Anthony will be attending Case Western Reserve University in the fall, to pursue a career as a writer and educator.

AFFRILACHIAN POET from page 12

that all too often didn't accept me.

Now, as I write this, thinking of how far I've come in my poetic and life journeys, I can't help but be overcome with joy. This honor has made me think back to where I was just four short years ago. I wouldn't believe myself if I'd said I'd be writing poetry about being Black

in Appalachia, being in community with other artists, redefining the narrative about what it means to be Appalachian — in all the beautiful multitudes in which we can present ourselves. But now look at me!

Many often ask me what advice I would give to young poets or those aspiring to find their place in this genre. All I can say is: you have a home in poetry!

FROM POET RAYNA MOMEN

Rayna Momen is an unapologetically Black, trans, abolitionist, poet, and queer criminologist. Born and raised in West Virginia, they have spent a lifetime trying to survive every encounter in predominately white spaces, while disrupting oppressive systems that attempt to erase and discredit their existence.

Growing Up Black

I.
on the outskirts of Morgantown, West Virginia
nestled between two panhandles
near a college town that would otherwise
have had little to offer in the way of diversity,
where the neighborhoods and schools
resembled a pre-Brown v. Board of Education era
and the Klan burned crosses
in the fields I once traversed.

II.
Lectures about having to work harder
to prove myself, because people
didn't expect me to amount to much
were the closest I'd get to having the conversation,
schools only taught me about slaves
and a handful of activists
who made their way
into the otherwise blank pages.
I knew it was the way it was
but I could never truly understand why.

III.
My skin became a target the first time
a white boy leaned back in his second-grade chair
and called me nigger, and again
as the rock struck my head on the picnic bench
at recess, and when my best friends' parents
wouldn't allow them to date my kind.

I learned about difference in low expectations
in blood, in slurs, in silence,
in headlines and night mares
in confederate flags, in white hoods and sheets
in locked doors and clutched purses
in sirens, interrogation and scary-eyed stares
as a token, a bulls-eye, my Black skin
turned thick from hate.

— Rayna Momen



**The Mountain Valley Pipeline is
steamrolling its way through the
mountains, land, and water of West
Virginia and Virginia.**

**For nearly a decade, a coalition of
landowners, Black community leaders,
Indigenous water protectors, and
climate activists have fought to stop it.**

**We believe we can win. And to do so, we
need your help.**

Visit stopmvp.org to take action.



JUST HOW STUPID DO THEY THINK WE ARE?

21st century dreams; 19th century education

BY ELLIOT G. HICKS

In late December 2019, the news was that thirty-four Cadets of the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation Basic Training Class let themselves be photographed offering Nazi salutes as a joke about their strict drill instructor.

I never found myself having sympathy for people who fail to understand the impact of Nazism, which resulted in some of the most savage and inhumane acts the world has known. I found myself having some sympathy for these cadets, though. In this state that takes such pride in being gentle, kind, and welcoming, how can we scratch together this many aspiring correctional officers, West Virginians from various walks of life, who all fail to understand that playing around with Nazi symbolism is repugnant and unacceptable? It's pure ignorance.

When we add that they're striving for a job with armed control over people of all races and ethnicities, we've got to worry that we've pulled the plug on public education.

That shocking display of ignorance was not enough for some Republican lawmakers in West Virginia. While the incident made it clear that our knowledge of world history is so severely lacking that we have 34 fledgling correctional officers thinking that playing with Nazi imagery doesn't hurt anybody, several members of our legislature want to make sure West Virginia students are ignorant of American history, as well. In the most recent legislative session this January, they introduced House Bill 4011 to fight a ghost that doesn't exist in West Virginia. They incorrectly call it critical race theory.

This bill wasn't offered because there have been actual incidents of anyone in West Virginia trying to say that "all" people of any certain race of people are bad just because our country's history on race relations is so bad. The only reason talk of this bill existed is that some Republican legislators are simply marionettes, dancing to the tune of a national movement within the Republican Party to bury the

The West Virginia and the West Virginians I know don't want to be ignorant. The West Virginians I know are earnest, good people, who would like to have good government, good schools, good jobs, and who would like to have progress and prosperity. These are the people who have warmly welcomed me, an African American son of this state, to the streets of nearly every county seat in West Virginia where I have been privileged to practice law for the past 40 years.

ugly history of racism in the United States, perhaps to make it easier to perpetuate some remnants of that history.

The bill didn't actually pass, but not for lack of trying. Republican Senate leaders tried to hide the bill in the flurry of last-minute business that it needed to take up as the clock neared the midnight deadline on the legislative session. They had several bills they wanted to hide that way — so many that they ran out of time to cram them through without notice. Their affirmative vote to enshrine ignorance into our state laws failed "on a technicality."

In its song, "Everybody is a Star," Sly and the Family Stone said, "you don't need darkness to do what you think is right." Well, these legislators apparently had a lot of things they didn't think were

right as the session moved to a close, because it was the legislative traffic jam that killed the bill, and not an attack of good conscience that we might have hoped for.

This isn't a West Virginia effort. In our state where people of color make up less than 5 percent of the population, with African Americans making up 3.5 percent, West Virginia hasn't been a hotbed of radical liberal teaching. These poor parrots introduced this bill solely because people outside of our state told them to, to advance "the cause."

Amusingly, they called this proposed legislation the "Anti-Stereotyping Act." Of course, the people who proposed these laws were silent as if their tongues had been cut from their mouths when officials within their own party erected a fact-free, hate-filled display against the entire Muslim religion in the halls of the state legislature in our state capitol on "Republican Day" two years ago.

My question is, just how stupid do they think we are?

Every time I write about issues of social justice, I take time to praise my beloved home state for being a live-and-let-live place that offered me wonderful opportunities to succeed. Do these narrow-minded legislators think of West Virginia differently? Is this really what they believe West Virginians want or need? Is this what these legislators think will get them votes and keep them in office. I have to say, my experience is that West Virginians are better than that.

Look, we have been exploited time and time again by outside interests that have made West Virginia pay an inestimable cost to provide energy to our country, while we remain one of the poorest and least educated states in the entire nation. Our people received almost nothing for that, and our lawmakers are determined to give away what little we have gotten. Indeed, the innocent ignorance that has led to our being exploited virtually from A-to-Z is now being further manipulated to let these legislators

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Church basements housed private classes during the public schools boycott in Kanawha County in 1975.

AP Photo

BEFORE THERE WAS CRT...

Perverting the children

1974 textbook controversy in W.Va. was a precursor to the conflict around critical race theory

BY KYLE VASS

Kit Thornton was ten years old when his father, an evangelical preacher, started attending meetings at a local church about textbooks that were being considered by the board of education in Kanawha County, West Virginia.

“A group of people from outside of the area came in and started showing slideshows to the people in the churches claiming that the textbooks were teaching atheism, godlessness, homosexuality,” Thornton said, “and [with these books] we’re going to pervert the children.”

These men, Thornton later found out, worked for The Heritage Foundation — the same organization that, fifty-some years later, would galvanize a conservative movement around the boogeyman of “critical race theory.” The actual theory — a field of legal scholarship that is critical of how liberalism attempts to fix racism — was rebranded by a Heritage Foundation author named Chris Rufo in 2021 in an article he wrote for the organization.

Three months after Rufo introduced CRT to conservatives as the next big thing to corrupt America’s

youth, The New Yorker’s Benjamin Wallace-Wells dubbed Rufo “the man who invented the conflict around critical race theory.” Wells, who interviewed Rufo for his story, surmised the rebranding was to shift discussions around anti-racism into terrain more friendly to those whites who opposed the efforts.



Kit Thornton

social uprisings. Using social unrest to effect change had been an effective tool for Democrats who had successfully organized labor unions and shifted US foreign policy away from the war in Vietnam. Republicans, eager to cash in on the tactic, wanted in. According to scholars, West Virginia, with its legacy of miner strikes and penchant for traditionalism, was an ideal place to begin.

For Thornton — a kid growing up in West Virginia at the time — censorship was always part of his home life. His father cut out articles from Newsweek he deemed inappropriate for the rest of the family. If Thornton was caught reading any of it, he was physically abused.

To avoid his father’s wrath, Thornton established a hiding spot in the woods behind his house to consume information his dad wouldn’t approve of. He dubbed a cave in these woods where he would read “Fort Milton” in an homage to John Milton, the author of Paradise Lost — one of the many books his father would not let him have at home.

While physical abuse and censorship were part of his childhood, Thornton said politics weren’t.

“The church that I grew up in, the Southern Baptists, had always had a tradition of keeping politics out of the pulpit. It wasn’t considered appropriate to talk about political issues,” he said.

According to Thornton, all of that changed in 1974.

Not long after Thornton’s father began attending these meetings at his church, a woman named Alice Moore began popping up in local media outlets echoing some of the same concerns Thornton’s dad

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had taken home from the meetings. Moore had made a name for herself having successfully lobbied to remove sex education from county schools. Now, she was on the school board. The summer before the 1974 school year began, Moore had shifted her focus to banning books.

Decades before a Texas Republican, running for Attorney General on an anti-CRT platform, compiled a list of 850 books he feared would make students “feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress because of their race or sex,” there was Moore. Moore’s list, which contained a meager 325 titles, included books Thornton kept in his cave including “Paradise Lost,” “The Autobiography of Malcolm X” and other books she called “filthy trash, disgusting, one-sidedly in favor of blacks, and unpatriotic.”

At one school board meeting, Moore responded to a Black person who took issue with her position on banning a book that discussed racism, by telling the attendee the book doesn’t “represent black culture,” adding “it isn’t a fair representation of your culture.” Moore’s comment foreshadowed those made by US House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) last year when he attempted to explain how CRT (the version defined by the GOP, not by history) goes against Martin Luther King Jr.’s teachings.

Thornton, who’s now 57 and has expatriated, said he watched as strict censorship he faced at home was on the verge of becoming school policy. Early in the summer of 1974, he noticed glossy pamphlets discussing the textbooks being circulated throughout town. His father tried to keep them from Thornton. But, along with the copies of books he secured for Fort Milton, he found a way to sneak away with one.

“These quotes on the pamphlets were attributed to literature textbooks that were being approved. And those [pamphlets] were the things that ministers all over the area were pointing at,” he said.

The pamphlets, which were provided by a Texas-based think tank, excerpted college level books, misrepresenting them as quotes from children’s textbooks. Next to the quotes were graphic images of genitalia. A far-reaching network of conservatives were using misinformation to fan the flames of a conflict brewing in a school board. Nearly half a century later, this scene would become a regular occurrence.



AP Photo

The Ku Klux Klan pledged to unite anti-textbook forces in Kanawha County. These women stand with a cross burned at a rally in Charleston in 1975.

As the summer wound down, the school board met to decide the fate of its curriculum: the textbook selection committee versus Moore and 12,000 signatures. Her side lost three-to-two. But, the school board decision to approve these books only inspired more action from Moore and the growing number of people demanding to ban books. In September, Thornton, along with 20 percent of the county’s students, didn’t show up for school.

“They decided that they would send us to alternative schools. And, they hastily put these things together in church basements here and there. The first day that I was sent to this alternative school, a man came into the room, slammed an inch thick board down on the desk with a handle carved into it hard enough to make us all jump, and said, ‘This

is in case anybody’s wondering who the boss is around here,’” Thornton said.

Thornton said he recalls feeling unshaken during this time. Not being at home with his abusive father felt safer than going to this improvised school.

Denise Giardina, a young public school teacher in the county at the time, on the other hand was terrified. Giardina had just decided to go into teaching. Now, in her first year, there were angry protesters screaming at her on the way in and out of the building.

As protests ramped up in the following weeks, the Ku Klux Klan and the United Mine Workers of America showed up to join the protesters. One class she taught at the time only had two children in it. Everyone else’s parents were either keeping their children home out of protest or were afraid of what might happen if they sent their kids to school, according to Giardina.



Denise Giardina

One day, she arrived to find out an empty school bus had been shot up.

“I had to put tape on the hood of my car. We were told to do that so that we could tell if somebody had tampered under the hood. I remember sitting there with those two kids and halfway expecting

somebody to throw a Molotov cocktail through the window,” Giardina said.

Within a month of the bus shooting, an elementary school was bombed outside of school hours. A kindergarten classroom was leveled by the blast. County police found dynamite outside another school and the school board building before they could be detonated. Eventually, arrests were made in connection to the bombings. One man, Marvin Horan, was prosecuted on conspiracy charges after it was revealed that he had planned on blowing up a bus full of children.

Giardina said the trauma of watching hordes of angry, racist protesters being met with leniency from officials all came flooding back to her on January 6, 2021.

“That was a real flashback. I’d also get them from watching Trump rallies. The way they’d yell threats

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at CNN reporters and stuff like that? It's the same mindset," she said.

By November, the protests had dwindled down. But, not before Alice Moore was able to get the school board to approve her new guidelines for the future selection of textbooks. One of the adopted guidelines required that textbooks must "recognize the sanctity of the home" and mustn't "defame our nation's founders" or "imply that an alien form of government is superior." Writing an opinion piece nearly five decades after Moore, WV State Senator Eric Tarr deemed CRT both unamerican and "not a West Virginia value."

According to Carol Mason, a University of Kentucky professor specializing in right-wing movements, many different factions of the American Right underwent transformations because of the textbook controversy. The Heritage Foundation symbolized the rise of the New Right, which saw the advantage of portraying themselves as "regular" people.

"The Old Right was lambasted for being elite. Conservatives like William F. Buckley were seen as Ivy League eggheads. The New Right wanted to change that perception of conservatism and shift their image from blue-blood to blue-collar," Mason said.



Carol Mason

Mason, a West Virginia native, is the author of *Reading Appalachia from Left to Right: Conservatives and the 1974 Kanawha County Textbook Controversy*. Her book documents how New Right leaders from Washington, DC, not only trained textbook protest organizers in Kanawha County, the leaders learned from the organizers, too. Learning how to enrage rural America, her book argues, would shape conservative organizing efforts for decades to come.

The conflict, according to Mason, was also a turning point for the far right. In a January, 1975, photograph of the Klan gathered to protest the textbook controversy, men in white robes give a Nazi salute to a burning cross. This photo, published by the West Virginia Humanities Commission during



AP Photo

ABOVE: Kanawha County Board of Education member Alice Moore addresses the board in 1975.

BELOW: A woman protests against textbooks in Charleston in 1974.



the textbook protest in Kanawha County, is "one of the earliest indications of an amalgamation of different kinds of white supremacist groups," says Mason.

The West Virginia curriculum dispute gave common cause to extremist groups that had not before come together, ultimately resulting in what historians have called the "Nazification of the Klan, the Aryan Nations", or the white power movement.

"People don't realize how active influential

neo-Nazis were behind the scenes in Kanawha County. George Dietz and William Pierce, both based in West Virginia, used the textbook conflict to recruit," Mason said.

George Dietz would go on to create the periodical *White Power Report*, and William Pierce's *The Turner Diaries*, which was written around the same time as the textbook controversy, became a blueprint for later racist violence such as murders by The Order in the 1980s and the Oklahoma City Bombing of 1995.

Mason says the textbook controversy was successful in switching the left-leaning protest culture in West Virginia that favored labor unions to a right-leaning protest culture that was gaining speed. Outside agitators stoked the grassroots.

"There had been a serious history of left-wing protest culture in West Virginia, and the Kanawha County textbook controversy showed the people who were creating the New Right how to shift communities and societies from the left to the right," she said.

Mason continued to research how the rise of the New Right had created a framework that would ultimately lead to the anti-progressive populist surge that helped elect former president Trump. In a 2011 essay titled "From Textbooks to Tea Parties," Mason reveals that textbook protesters were courted by outside groups including The Populist Forum and The National Front, groups that networked neo-Nazi organizations with people leading local protests like the one in Kanawha County.

Her book quotes Robert Hoy, co-founder of The Populist Forum, from his 1982 essay, "Lid On a Boiling Pot," where he reflects on organizing efforts.

"We spent several years trying to channel the energy and resentment of many sporadic uprisings against the establishment into some kind of enduring alliance. Wildcat miners, textbook protesters, despairing farmers, opponents of busing: These and others came under our purview.

We sympathized heartily with the pressing concerns of these grassroots activists, and made it an unvarying point of honor to begin by asking each group, 'What can we do for you?'" Hoy wrote.

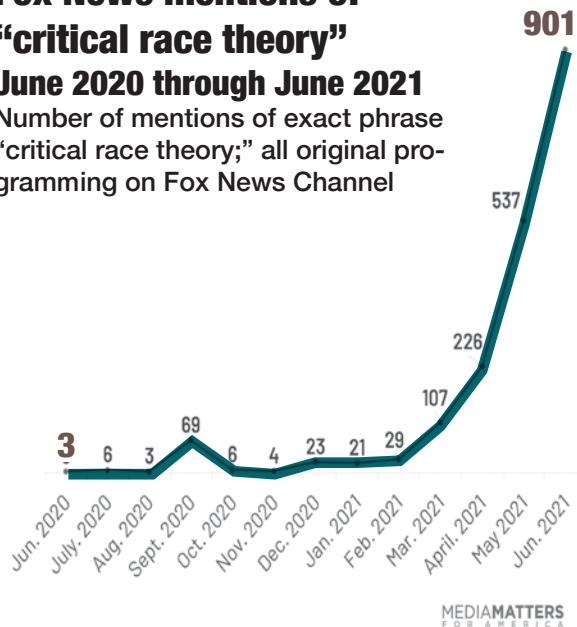
More than just a setting for the textbook controversy, nowhere in the US better illustrates the radical shift from supporting Democrats to Republicans than West Virginia. Once one of the bluest states in the union, it has failed to keep up with the party of the young and educated. Last year, the state lost a congressional seat as a result of its population

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Fox News mentions of “critical race theory”

June 2020 through June 2021

Number of mentions of exact phrase “critical race theory;” all original programming on Fox News Channel



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decline — the most rapid in the nation. And, the state ranks dead-last in the number of people who hold a college degree per capita.

In January of 2021, lawmakers in the Republican supermajority that controls both houses of the West Virginia Legislature introduced two bills to address baseless allegations of critical race theory being taught in schools. At the time, the bills were considered fringe, not even taken up by their respective committees. But in spring of that year, the national dialogue around CRT shifted among conservatives.

A Media Matters report released in June 2021 showed Fox News, the most watched news network in the country, had begun to feature the phrase “critical race theory” thousands of times. Starting in March, the usage more than doubled each month. Days after the report was released, Media Matters counted that by the end of June, the network had featured the word more than 1,900 times in a four-month window.

Rufo’s version of CRT that was being beamed into the collective psyche of conservative America was framed as admonishing “all white people for being oppressors while classifying all Black people as hopelessly oppressed victims,” according to a report from Brookings Institute.

Following the deluge of conservative media reports portraying teachers and children as having to publicly prostrate themselves across America

for being white, Republican lawmakers across the nation crafted bills to come up with a solution for their own boogeyman: ban the teaching or discussion of racism in schools. By the time the 2022 West Virginia Legislative session rolled around, lawmakers in the state had crafted legislation that had gone a step further.

Educators at all levels (kindergarten to university) could be sued if they were found to have taught material that caused a student to “feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress because of the individual’s race, ethnicity, or biological sex.”

The bill lifted language directly from Florida’s “Stop Woke Act,” and applied it specifically to educational settings. The West Virginia version also took a page from Orwell in its nomenclature. “The Anti-Racism Act of 2022” failed on a technicality. Senate President Craig Blair was mid-proclaiming the bill as a law at the stroke of midnight on the last day of session when he ran out of time. The bill, however, is rumored to be back on the agenda in June for an interim session, according to lawmakers interviewed for this story.

Half a mile away and 47 years in the past, the Kanawha County Board of Education Building was the site of a battle that “crystaled” the current strategy being used to drum up panic about CRT, says Mason.

“This time around, right-wing strategists are striving more than ever to paint their work as that of the white working class,” she said.

Despite the GOP’s rebrand, there is no evidence that shows a relationship between income and support for the Republican party. Financially insecure voters, even in the era of Trump, tend to vote for left-wing politicians. The shining light being held up by anti-CRT legislation advocates, according to Anthony Dimaggio, author of the book *Rebellion in America*, is white supremacy.

“America’s battle over ‘critical race theory’ reminds us of an ugly truth about the enduring white supremacy that’s long defined this country. In a potent racist backlash moment against the rising Black Lives Matter movement, many states have moved in Orwellian ‘Big Brother’ style to entirely ban discussions of structural and institutional racism from K through 12 and college classrooms,” Dimaggio said.

Dimaggio adds that this backlash isn’t confined to the Republican party, citing a 2018 University of Virginia poll which “revealed that 35 percent of

Americans, including 26 percent of Democrats, 29 percent of independents, and 51 percent of Republicans, agreed that ‘America must protect and preserve its White European heritage.’”



Anthony Dimaggio

According to Mason, waving the “false banner of working party politics” has given Republicans pushing for anti-CRT legislation cover, allowing them to blow an effective and racist dog whistle.

“Attacks on critical race theory hide their agenda to shut down

discussions of race. A major component of that effort is convincing the whitest parts of America with the least amount of college education that their nation is under attack from top and bottom: immigrants and People of Color from below, wealthy elites from above,” he said.

“That’s how populism works, by validating people’s sense of vulnerability and stoking their resentment. Populism is about ‘the people’ against presumed parasites. People feel cheated by those they think are unfairly getting ahead, such as immigrants and people on welfare. And they also feel cheated by ‘elites’ who they presume do not actually earn their paychecks.”

BBG note:

It is worth noting that the “working class” is typically defined in America not just by income, but also by — and often primarily by — level of education. As Dimaggio references saying “A major component of that effort is convincing the whitest parts of America with the least amount of college education that their nation is under attack...”

President Lyndon B. Johnson once said, “If you can convince the lowest white man he’s better than the best colored man, he won’t notice you’re picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he’ll empty his pockets for you.”

BECKLEY

Community demands answers after man dies in jail

BY KABREA JAMES

The Beckley Police Department arrested Quantez L. Burks, 37, at his home on Feb. 28, 2022 after receiving reports of a disturbance. Burks was then transported to Southern Regional Jail, where he unfortunately perished under suspicious circumstances.

Preliminary results of a second autopsy ordered by his family revealed that Burks suffered fractured bones, bruising, contusions and swelling all over his body while in custody. Attorney Dwight Staples of Henderson, Henderson, & Staples Law Firm is representing the family and said blunt force trauma caused Burks to have a heart attack, which ultimately led to Burks's death.

"We are committed to supporting the pursuit of justice and accountability for Mr. Burks through peaceful means and pledge our ongoing support to the community," Staples said, "We call upon the community to be patient and calm at this difficult, emotional

time."

Burks's body was initially transported to the West Virginia Medical Examiner's Office in Charleston for an autopsy and the second autopsy was conducted in Pittsburgh, Pa. Staples is now demanding a separate state and federal investigation of Burks's death. He is also calling for Southern Regional Jail to release video footage of Burks in the facility's custody.

Beckley resident George King stated not enough people are talking about Burks's death and that he believes the incident is racially motivated.

"It is a shame that we as Black people are tried, judged and executed solely based on our skin," King said, "Sad to say but most aren't outraged but used to this. It isn't a surprise because this is life for black people in West Virginia."

On April 15, The West Virginia National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) announced that distinguished Civil Rights attorney Benjamin Crump would be directing the representation of Burks's family. Crump is most known for his

esteemed work with civil rights and wrongful death lawsuits, such as the George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery cases.

Raleigh County NAACP President Barbara Charles said the community is behind Burks's family one hundred percent. She also urges everyone to come together during this tough time in order to bring about change that is long overdue.

"Fifty years after the Civil Rights Movement and where are we?" Charles said, "We've grown too comfortable. This is a system that never worked for us, just pacified us and lulled us to sleep. We're more conscious now."

Staples requested that the United States Justice Department and the Prosecuting Attorney's Office in Beckley conduct a full criminal investigation in addition to the investigation by West Virginia State Police and the State Department of Corrections.

The NAACP asks that anyone who wishes to offer support and donate to Burks's family due so at [QuantezLamarBurks.com](https://www.QuantezLamarBurks.com)

21ST CENTURY DREAMS from page 15

paint us as bigots, who not only don't know, but don't want to know.

The classic definition of ignorance describes someone who simply doesn't know. When you don't know, and you don't want to know, that goes beyond ignorance to become stupidity. Well, just how stupid do they think we are?

It's hard to imagine that majority party legislators in the state with the lowest college-going rate in the country offered two bills to intimidate our teachers under threat of law to leave our students even less prepared. This is the same state whose elementary and secondary students' standardized testing performance has been so bad that some of these same giants of education in our legislature at the same time drafted and proposed another bill that would make us stop measuring ourselves against the rest of the country by abolishing our participation in such testing. Success through ignorance. What a winning strategy!

These legislators want our children to know even

less about history. They don't want our children to be able to compete for seats at the best colleges and universities. Legislators are doing this on purpose. They want a gullible, ignorant group of citizens, who don't know how the government works, and can't tell when people are lying to them about the history of our country.

The only thing that gives life to the lies that led to the insurrection on January 6, 2021 is the ignorance of the people being told those lies. Anybody who had any decent class in civics knows that we had a fair election in 2020, that is not subject to being overturned on a made-up technicality just because the Vice President "wants to." They spread lies about the rules. They spread lies about the facts. They spread lies that endanger our democracy. Now they want to fertilize the ground for further lies that will let them get elected to preside over an ever more ignorant populace.

But I want to know: Just how stupid do they think we are?

The West Virginia and the West Virginians I know don't want to be ignorant. The West Virginians I know are earnest, good people, who would

like to have good government, good schools, good jobs, and who would like to have progress and prosperity. These are the people who have warmly welcomed me, an African American son of this state, to the streets of nearly every county seat in West Virginia where I have been privileged to practice law for the past 40 years.

The ignorant, bigoted people some of our legislators seem to think they represent are not the people I have seen in West Virginia during my lifetime. I've got to know: Just how stupid do they think we are?

When these people lie to us, and tell us they want to do everything to help our state bring in new businesses with well-paying jobs, and that they want make West Virginia a destination for young people with creative ideas, those are just more of the lies they want us to be too stupid to recognize.

If we keep electing people like this to our leadership, then I've got one other question to ask. Just how stupid are we?

Elliot Hicks is a Charleston lawyer and business owner. He is a former president of the West Virginia State Bar, the first Black lawyer to hold that position.

GLOBAL THE EBON RUN GLOBAL
JANUARY 15, 2022 \$1.00
Your are its EYES...It is your VOICE!!!

GLOBAL WATCH
A-1-15-2022-1
Ethiopia & Kenya Set to Manufacture EVs
African nations can indeed unite to pull off extraordinary things. Announced at a summit conference on May 12th, Ethiopia and Kenya are planning to build a \$500 million assembly plant potentially being growth of 300 employees and manufacturing 5,000 vehicles annually. Sparta Inc. has joined forces with them to create and produce EVs suited for their regions and is seeking other investors interested in improving the road.

POSSIBLY INNOCENT
A-1-15-2022-8
Rodney Reads Death Row, Texas, How You Can Help.

CURRENT EVENTS USA
A-1-15-2022-15
Mass Protests Over Killings of Black College Students

SWEET LICORICE
A-1-15-2022-115
Old Soul R&B Band seeks to Bring Back the Genre—With a Purpose!

Rodney Reed, who maintains his innocence, has been on death row for more than 27 years for the murder of Stacey Stiles in Batting, Texas. Since his in 1995 trial, substantial evidence exonerates Rodney and implicates Stacey's then-fiance Jimmy Perrell, a former local police officer. On Nov. 15, 2010, Rodney was granted an indefinite stay of execution, just five days before his scheduled execution date of Nov. 20, 2010. He is awaiting a new hearing, which has been delayed to July 19.

It was 5:00 PM in Orlando, FL, where students Jamal Hayes, Jase Lawrence, and Peter Strong were seen walking out of a bank that was robbed nearby. Their descriptions supposedly fit those of those suspected of the crime. In mere minutes, they were surrounded by the cops in blue and told the usual regarding faces to the ground and hands around the back. Then, one of the suspects was reported of trying to flee the scene, with

We're bringing back the good stuff the pure soul that shook the hearts of our parents and of so much of our people before it was washed down by American commercialism," said Malik Milborn, founding member of The Rethorn Bloods, a Memphis, TN band started in 2020. Milborn and crew hope to start a whole concert circuit dedicated to the genre he classifies as the "real music of Black culture." We want to rescue our genuine stuff from ruthless appropriators who want

If you will be its EYES...



...it will be your VOICE!!!



A Fellow Black West Virginian's Quest to Advance Earth's Global Black Populace via Printed Media

The best illustration is to show the extreme. Imagine, if you will, a world where everything went digital, and there was only **one** printed periodical left in existence. It was the only one on all bookstore/supermarket/store shelves, libraries, doctors'/dentists'/lawyers' offices, newsstands, and in all home deliveries. Then, at that point, it would have a **tremendous advantage** over all other sources of periodical media—would it not?

While digital fatigue takes its toll on the virtual swarm, that lone, printed, publication wouldn't get washed away in that tidal wave of digital clutter. It would be there in bold form, catching the people's attention—as said, readily readable.

Being out of print indicates **decline**—that you're no longer able to obtain the support necessary to maintain that functional capability...while possessing the ability to remain in print means you're one of the fighters left standing, still strong in the game. Those still left **know** this. They know, once they leave the printed arena, their future is bleaker.

The only **real** question is, how would one arrange financing to ensure one remains in the game...or flat-out DOMINATES the game? That's where the extra profit-makers would come into play:

1) Ad Spaces: Pretty much self-explanatory. Sell spaces, and classified ads, at the most reasonable prices that can help subsidize—or, if possible, fully fund—the printing & distribution of copies.

2) MR., & MS., "BLACK RISE": *The Ebon Run* will conduct contests, or "pageants," to allow its Black subscribers to elect the male (MR. BLACK RISE) and female (MS. BLACK RISE) contestants most physically/intellectually appealing and most dedicated to the Black Cause—whereby the winners will serve as spear headers for Black Advancement for one year. **An entry fee will be charged to all contestants.**

3) Charges for Subscriber (Membership) Levels: *Ebon Run* subscribers will be able to purchase yearly membership levels of Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, on up to Diamond—with each successive one granting greater rewards and benefits.

4) Printing Services: During normal operations, part of the profits will be set aside to fund the purchasing of printing facilities in various cities of circulation. If/When obtained, these facilities will print

Ebon Run copies at break-even cost—plus would sell printing services to the public for profit. Part of that profit would be used to subsidize magazine printing/distribution.

5) Web/App-Networking Services: The *Ebon Run* Web/App would allow subscribers to connect via email opt-in, whereby subscribers could opt in to receive emails from other subscribers regarding various categories. "Email advertisers" would be charged a fee per email (subscriber), maybe 10¢ each. Of course, many other profitable services/offers could be available.

6) *Ebon Run* Gear: T-Shirts, caps, hoodies, bottles, etc...eventually moving into jewelry, shoes, accessories, etc.

7) *Ebon Run* Business Fund (ERBF): This would be a 501c3 allowing for donations to fund Black business startups/expansion—as well as *Ebon Run* endeavors benefitting the Black race. *The Ebon Run* could take advantage of this by using part of the funds to provide subsidized/free subscriptions for the underserved.

8) *Ebon Run* Partners: The partners would put up capital in exchange for an ad on a page collectively reserved for them and for dividends granted them from profit from all *Ebon Run* money-making endeavors.

All these money-makers would be used to increasingly lower the printing/distribution costs of the magazine—until, eventually, every Black hand wanting copies could afford copies—or even receive them for free in certain cases.

Unlike other news/info publications, the *Run* will be especially dedicated to proposing/promoting/initiating projects designed to move our people forward in a **PRO**active manner. *Ebon Run* staff will lead the way in conceiving and/or spotting the most promising projects bearing the greatest potential of advancing our race and then will present the developmental plan to our people via articles in the publication. They'll then assist supporters in taking action or will, themselves, initiate any project for which they independently have the resources to launch.

I invite you to join the cause at **TheEbonRun.com**.

I also invite all upstanding Black individuals EVERYWHERE to join BLACQUITY.net—free membership for life!

The ability to connect, network, and collaborate with virtually EVERY literate Black entity on the face of the earth.

That's the mission of a critical project that would allow our people to advance or socio-economic status via printed media.

Black Partners, along with a support base, are now being sought who are interested in forming a global-wide **printed** news/info distribution network allowing our people to spread their vital messages to our brothas/sistas all across the planet, stay informed of critical matters, and connect and network to enact **PROGRESSIVE PROJECTS** to finally **GET THINGS DONE!!!!**...for our people.

The Ebon Run is a magazine project in development that will allow the people to write their own articles in their own words—hence its slogan: "You are its EYES...it is your VOICE!!!" When/If successfully established, it will be a bi-weekly (every two weeks) periodical—24 editions per year.

Why "Print"? Because virtual space is **crowded**, often **intrusive**—and all too habitually **IGNORED!**... "digital fatigue." **Physical**, readily readable (no electronic device needed), printed matter in a person's presence is much more likely to be noticed, examined... and **appreciated**...because it's **in your face**...but in a **good** way. Plus, when leaving it "on a table," in a hospital lobby, or on a library or dentist's magazine rack, someone **else** will notice it.

A NEW FACE IN

CYBER SECURITY

Just a kid from Charleston, West Virginia

According to the U.S. Labor Department, African Americans make up a scant three percent of infosecurity analysts in the country today while the cyber security industry complains about a persistent talent shortage — West Virginia too.

Meet Myles Satterfield a Marshall University Grad, Cyber Security Analyst with a growing managed security provider.

Q: *What brought you into the security space?*

Ever since I was a kid I was fascinated with computers. Anytime I could get my hands on one I would spend hours messing around on it — if I didn't decide to take it apart. I can remember walking through the neighborhood and seeing password-protected WiFi networks, wondering if there was a way to bypass the security to get some internet access. I gained some coding experience through camps and high school, so I decided to go to college for computer science at Marshall. I eventually switched my major to Digital Forensics and Information Assurance and that is where I formally got introduced to the field.

Q: *What is your role now at Expel?*

I lead the Global Response team, which is a team of senior and principal analysts that handles critical response operations for Expel. Our #SOC helps our customers get a grip on their enterprise and cloud environments 24/7. We have the constant

opportunity to chase down attackers and observe new tactics and techniques. Not only does this lead to world class response for our customers, but we are able to share the knowledge across the broader team to strengthen everyone's skills.

Q: *What do you love most about working in/leading a SOC, and the team at Expel?*

I am thankful to have the opportunity to work on a high performing team and solve challenging problems. Every member of the team is dedicated to working together and providing the highest level of service. Being able to develop processes that drive business and provide that world class service to our customers while helping individuals reach their career goals is an extremely rewarding experience. We have a great culture that prioritizes learning and taking care of our customers. Expel as a whole has put a lot of time in creating an environment and culture that is important to everyone.

Q: *What do you enjoy doing with your time outside of work?*

One of my favorite pastimes is digging through the crates at old record stores for vinyls. I love that I am able to combine my passion for computers with my love for music and audio production. I also enjoy traveling and spending time with my family in West Virginia.

Because cyber security allows for remote working Myles is currently located in Los Angeles, California while keeping his roots in West Virginia. If he's not working with Expel, or traveling he is in the Forever The Family Studio.



Explore a career **expel**[™]

RALEIGH COUNTY STORMWATER AND SEWAGE SYSTEMS

NAACP ramps up battle against rate hike

BY KABREA JAMES

The Raleigh County Commission is taking further action against an approved rate hike for local stormwater and sewage systems.

On Monday, May 16, the three members of the Raleigh County Commission moved forward with a lawsuit against the city of Beckley and the Beckley Sanitary Board (BSB). The complaint states that county residents paying the fee have no representation on the board imposing the fee, that the fee is technically an “illegal tax” and that the Beckley Sanitary Board is not consistent regarding which county residents are required to pay the stormwater fee and which residents are not.

The Raleigh County Commission is also demanding an end to the stormwater fee imposed on county residents outside city limits and asking that all fees al-

ready collected be returned to residents.

Jeremiah Johnson, the General Manager of BSB, asked the Beckley Common Council for a rate increase on April 26, 2022, to combat flooding in the Hartley Avenue/Beckley Little League/Pinecrest area, which is mostly made up of minority and senior residents. He also stated that the hike would assist with operating costs within the current stormwater system. The project is expected to cost close to \$5.6 million.

A back-and-forth spanning decades, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People originally requested improvements to the Hartley Avenue/Beckley Little League/Pinecrest area in the 1970s. Raleigh County NAACP President Barbara Charles said this is a long-standing issue and that the organization must move forward on behalf of the city’s marginalized residents.

“This is going to be a battle,” Raleigh County NAACP President Barbara Charles said, “We are serving as a representation of the people.”

The new rate will cost the average residential user an increase of \$16.06 per month, which is \$192.72 per year. Beckley Resident Shawna Allen lives near Hartley Avenue and said she often experiences flooding in her front and back yard. Allen also expects the rising utility cost to cause her and her household some financial strain.

“It is outrageous honestly, especially when you’re the only income in the house,” Allen said.

Johnson said the rate increase is the stepping stone for the sanitary board to get a \$5 million stormwater improvement bond, which will also be used to work on areas of Stanford, Morgan Hills and Jamescrest. He added that the bond would eventually grow into a \$9 million investment into stormwater infrastructure.



COAL CAMP CEMETERY CLEANUP

The Mollett family gathers in front of the entrance to a historically Black cemetery of a coal camp community in Edwight of Raleigh County, W.Va. on Monday, May 30, 2022. Siblings Cleo Vernell Mollett, Sr. (72), David Lee Mollett (70), Doretha Elaine Mollett (69), Tanners Lee Mollett (67), and Christina Mollett (65), known to their family as the “WV 5”, made arrangements with the coal operators to visit annually since their forced evacuation in 1959 when the coal company closed and demolished their home and neighborhood. From New Jersey, South Carolina, Florida, and Delaware, family members reunite each year to clear away overgrowth and decorate the graves with flowers in cemeteries located in Edwight, Madison, and Logan. They bring their children and grandchildren — the next generations to carry on this tradition — and retell family stories of Edwight to remember and honor their ancestors on Memorial Day. The Mollett’s, who are the grandchildren of Bell Wilson, wife of Allen Wilson, who is buried at Edwight, extend their heartfelt thanks to the coal operators, who have over the years made their access to the cemetery easy and have participated in cleaning the cemetery as well.

Look for Anissa Mollett’s article about her family’s long-held tradition in an upcoming issue of BBG.

Apprentice your way into a career

Apprenticeships are a preferred recruiting and training method for leading companies like Google, Dow, Tesla and more

BY DAVE LAVENDER

With graduation here, recent grads find themselves stuck in a rut of two divergent paths. High school grads can either go to a university — and four years later (if they're lucky) — graduate but get saddled with an average of \$38,000 in debt.

Or... their middle-class hopes and dreams get slowly chewed up in the grind of a low-wage service job. Sure you can get fries with that — just not home ownership, or the ability to generate wealth.

Increasingly, there are — right here in West ByGod — a wealth of ways to earn while you're learning highly-sought-after skills during apprenticeships, and other short-term certifications to get you on the good foot and on the quickest path to being a high-wage earner.

Unfortunately, most graduates don't know these opportunities exist, particularly in West Virginia. Even though West Virginia's community and technical colleges have free last-dollar-in tuition, only about eight percent of high school graduates attend one, which can be one of the quickest — and cheapest — ways to a good-paying career.

www.collegeforwv.com/programs/invest-grant/how-it-works/

As Baby Boomer employees have died or retired (trends that Covid sadly sped up), more companies are turning to apprenticeship — no longer requiring a four-year degree, opting instead for skills-based knowledge and certifications to fast-track tech-savvy youth. Apprenticeships are now the preferred recruiting and training method for leading companies like Google, Intuit, Dow, Tesla, Ford, Nestle, Microsoft, and more. Apprenticeships in the U.S., are up 73 percent since 2009 for good reason. Companies desperately need to hire and train the next generation of workers. Apprentices make an average starting wage of \$15 an hour, although many make way more. And that is money netted without incurring a mountain of student loan debt.

Here's a quick guide to some career pathways here in West Virginia:

HOW DO I FIND OUT ABOUT APPRENTICESHIPS?

We have more than 5,000 active apprentices in West Virginia, and you can be one.

Go to www.apprenticeship.gov

Type in your city and apprenticeships in your area will pop up. Here in West Virginia, we are in the top 10 for the number of apprenticeships per capita. Apprentices earn a paycheck, and avoid the pitfall of student debt. Apprenticeships are available in everything from Aerospace and IT, to Brewing, Solar Panel Installation, Home Health Aides, Meatcutting, and Wind Turbine Technicians.

For building trades, there is a website that collects info for applying for apprenticeships for plumbers, painters, masons, electricians, sheet metal workers, iron workers, etc.

Many of those apprenticeship programs only require a high school diploma to get started. With America implementing the Build Back Better green energy initiatives this is a great time to get into the building and construction trades.

wvapprenticeships.com/programs/

■ **West Virginia Women Work:** WV Women Work has a Step Up for Women Construction Pre-Apprenticeship Program. This program is a tuition-free employment-based skilled trade training program designed to prepare adult women for entry-level positions in the



construction industry and registered apprenticeships. The next class starts in September in Charleston and Morgantown.

westvirginiawomenwork.org/step-up-construction

■ **RCBI:** RCBI ApprenticeshipWorks in Huntington has placed apprentices in 21 states. They have a youth pre-apprenticeship program for ages 16 to 24 that's online to help you decide if apprenticeship may be right for you.

They have some great apprenticeships Huntington companies including Level One Fasteners and Huntington Plating.

www.rcbi.org/industry/apprenticeships/pre-apprenticeships-in-advanced-manufacturing/

■ **RCBI Recovery Works:** RCBI also has a program called Recovery Works, a 15-week course that provides training to men and women affected in some way by the opioid crisis by preparing them for manufacturing careers and helping them overcome barriers to non-traditional

Continued on page 25

APPRENTICE from page 24

employment. Services are delivered at RCBI's Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center and at Catholic Charities West Virginia Center for Community Learning and Advancement, both located in Huntington.

www.rcbi.org/education-training/recovery-works/

SHORT TERM TRAININGS = LONG TERM PAYOUT

If you're looking for a short-term training that's an express ticket to a great paying job. There are several great options.

■ **CDL license:** You can get it in five weeks and they're being offered by a number of community and technical colleges that can help you pay for CDL training (typically about \$5,000). So in five weeks, you could get hired and be making an average of \$50,000 a year, with experienced drivers making \$75 to \$100K a year. Currently, four West Virginia CTCs offer CDL training: Southern, Eastern, Northern and New River.

Contact those CTCs for more info.

Find links to other CDL driving schools.

cdltrainingtoday.com/schools/wv/

For fun, and to learn more about modern trucking life, check out North Carolina-based Tik-Tok trucker sensation Clarissa Rankin at

www.tiktok.com/@clarissarankin?lang=en



■ **River Jobs:** The Mountwest Maritime Academy has a week-long deckhand training program to work the tow boats on the Ohio River. The next classes are set for July 11-17, 2022 and Oct. 31-Nov. 6, 2022. Take that training and immediately get hired to work on

the river.

They also have other value-added classes like Marine firefighter, steersman and others.

www.mctc.edu/programs/maritime-academy/

■ **Coding Boot Camps:** NewForce and Generation West Virginia have six-month, fully-remote, tuition-free software development training program for West Virginia residents. The software development program connects graduates with employers in the Mountain State who are ready to hire. NewForce is a partnership between Generation West Virginia, Mountwest Community and Technical College and the West Virginia Community and Technical College System. More than 85% of job-seeking graduates of the program have found employment in software development with West Virginia-based employers within six months of graduating. The average salary of all NewForce graduates is \$46,000.

newforce.co/get-in-touch/



EMERGING SECTOR AND NEW JOBS

Many great-paying apprenticeships require nothing more than a high school diploma and a willingness to learn a trade.

■ You can be a meatcutter apprentice at Buzz Foods (Appalachian Abattoir)

appalachianabattoir.com/careers/

■ You can be a Solar Panel Installation Apprentice with Solar Holler

www.solarholler.com/join-our-team/

■ You can be a machinist at the world famous Green Bank Observatory, which is run by the National Science Foundation, the government foundation that also runs NASA. How freaking

cool is that!

greenbankobservatory.org/about/careers/intern-apprentice-program

■ You can train at Bridge Valley CTC, to work for GreenPower Motor Company. A leader in alternative-energy vehicle manufacturing, they will begin production of its zero-emission, all-electric school buses called the BEAST (battery electric automotive school transportation) in the South Charleston Industrial Park. GreenPower Motor Company anticipates hiring hundreds of workers over the next few years. Earn a high wage, and have access to benefits which include health insurance, paid time off, parental leave, and professional development, while leaving a green footprint for future generations of West Virginians.

www.bridgevalley.edu/greenpower-motor-company

PLAY AND GET PAID

West Virginia also has some great resorts where you can play and get paid. An often-overlooked opportunity is that Snowshoe Mountain has inexpensive on-mountain housing for college-age student workers so you don't necessarily have to have transportation to work there. There are also dozens of interesting but entry-level jobs from working at the Starbucks and the front desk to lifeguard, helping with events, and just about anything you can name. The cool thing is that they have students come to work there from around the world so you get to learn about other cultures as well as working at one of the East Coast's best four-season mountain resorts that hosts events year-round, including this summer music fests, and the Mountain Bike World Cup races.

www.snowshoemtn.com/jobs

Dave Lavender is an Apprenticeship Coordinator with the West Virginia Department of Economic Development.

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Facebook: dave.lavender.77

Twitter @DaveTrippinWV

Instagram @dlavende

ASPIRING WOMAN MINORITY BUSINESS OWNER?

WV Women's Business Center to provide free mentoring

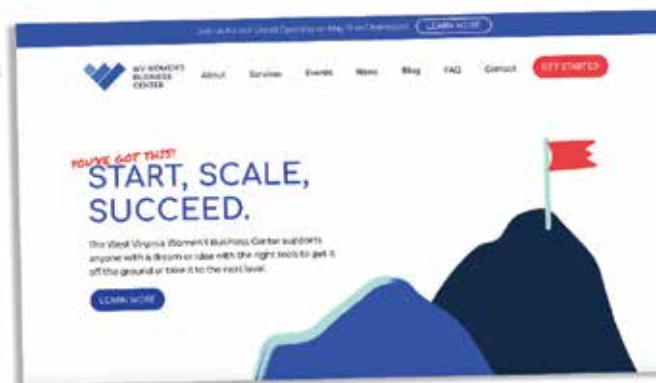
The driving force behind the Start, Scale, Succeed Mentorship program created by the West Virginia Women's Business Center is a simple idea: every woman deserves a mentor. Women in business have faced historical barriers and disadvantages, including a lack of mentors and networking opportunities.

For women of color — a fast-growing segment of entrepreneurs — this is a critical gap. Executive Director Nora Myers points out how the lack of access to resources is compounded in minority populations in West Virginia. "While it's harder for women everywhere, in a rural state with a small Black population such as West Virginia, the lack of business resources can be significant. Having a mentor committed to your success can be invaluable."

Black women entrepreneurs are an important presence in the US economy. In 2021, according to the Harvard Business Review, 17 percent of all Black women were starting or running a new business.

The Start, Scale, Succeed Mentorship program facilitates one-to-one mentoring relationships that connect mentees with mentors across West Virginia to learn how to become better business owners. Mentoring helps expand networks, gain new knowledge and insights, and build new skills. Woman to woman mentorships help with both career and personal development. Mentors share their experiences and perspectives, keeping in mind the best interests of the mentee.

One feature of the Start, Scale, Succeed program is flexibility. Once you join the program, you will get



a suggested match based on your needs and interests, but you can also reach out yourself to choose a mentor. After that, you can decide how and when to meet, how much time you have for developing your relationship, and what kind of experience you want.

It has been demonstrated many times that mentoring improves business start-ups and success rates. In 2018, SCORE reported that entrepreneurs with a mentor are five times more likely to start a business and more likely to remain in business after one year. Another study reported in Forbes magazine found that entrepreneurs with mentors had a 13 percent higher survival rate than the average for new businesses.

The West Virginia Women's Business Center provides tools and assistance to all West Virginians to help achieve their entrepreneurial dream. With offices in Charleston, Morgantown, Fairmont, and Huntington the WV WBC serves all 55 of West Virginia's counties. The WV WBC has helped hundreds

of clients start or expand their businesses.

The WV WBC is focused on providing services to women and other groups that traditionally face extra barriers to starting and growing businesses of their own. Improving opportunities for entrepreneurship benefits the whole economy in West Virginia.

The organization works hand-in-hand with entrepreneurs to discover their own definition of success and achieve it. Its advisors provide individual counseling, training on business and leadership topics, and access to funding. Whether someone is starting a business, ready to scale up, or looking for advice on maintaining success, the WV WBC can help.

Interested in becoming a mentor? Or are you a woman entrepreneur who would like to have support and encouragement to help you achieve your goals?

Contact the WV Women's Business Center at wwwwomen.org or 304-825-5000

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Students from West Liberty and recent graduates show support for the CROWN Act at an event in Wheeling in March.



Photo by Macie Roy www.instagram.com/mediabymace

The CROWN Act is becoming a movement ... without legislative support



**BY REBEKAH ARANDA AND
CATHERINE GOODING**

Time and again over the last several years, the West Virginia state legislature has been presented with opportunities to demonstrate their commitment to creating a more welcoming and equitable environment in West Virginia by passing the CROWN (Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) Act. Instead, state legislators have failed to act or, in some cases, intentionally derailed the momentum, and the bill has never reached the governor's desk. Stymied by the lack of action in the Capitol, CROWN Act organizers have looked to local governments to bring this important legislation to life.

The CROWN Act bill would make it illegal to discriminate against someone in a school, workplace, or public environment based on their hairstyle or

texture. At the state level, it was initially championed by Delegate Danielle Walker, the only Black woman currently serving in the state legislature; Charkera Evans, a Bluefield native and organizer at Our Future West Virginia; and Tarsha Green, the mother of a Beckley student who was forced to cut his hair to play basketball. When CROWN legislation was rejected in the Capitol in 2020, Del. Walker and local activists turned to the city of Morgantown to make changes in her home district instead. They were no longer willing to wait for meaningful policy changes to trickle down from reluctant state legislators.

Now, West Virginians are working within their local communities around the state to create the change around them. In her role as W.Va. National Organization for Women Vice President of Action, Charlestonian Katonya Hart is leading a committee of volunteers from all over the state to see that every West Virginia city has the opportunity to adopt

this ordinance. In addition, she has been involved in empowering constituents, making connections with city councilors and Human Rights Commissions (HRCs), and helping provide sample language for cities to adopt. To date, five West Virginia cities have passed the CROWN Act as a local ordinance.

Momentum kicked off with the Morgantown adoption of the ordinance as put forth by Delegate Walker and the local Human Rights Commission. Soon after, Beckley, Charleston, and Lewisburg followed suit. In December 2021, the West Virginia Human Rights Commission weighed in and passed a resolution calling on the legislature to pass the CROWN Act. Since then, the city of Huntington passed its own ordinance on March 15 and Nitro City Council has taken up the issue.

Wheeling is also working to pass the CROWN Act. City Councilwoman Rosemary Ketchum and

Continued on page 29

WEST LIBERTY STUDENTS SHOW OFF THEIR CROWNS

BY BBG

Wheeling and West Liberty, W.Va, take the crown for passing local hair protection ordinances, offering the community a “Textured Hair Expo” and local college students are wearing their hair like campus royalty.

In March 2022, Bridge Street Middle School in Wheeling hosted a Textured Hair Expo. Parents and students from all Ohio County schools were invited to attend. The event was in partnership with the YWCA Wheeling and several local barbers and hairstylists. Unique Murphy-Robinson, a licensed social worker for Bridge Street Middle School, was an integral part of bringing this idea to fruition, according to a *Weelunk* article. The event was a teachable moment helping parents of children with textured hair learn how to maintain it. The event was the first of its kind for West Virginia.

College students from the nearby West Liberty campus used the city of Wheeling as their backdrop to celebrate their crowns with a photo shoot by Macie Roy for Black By God.

Participating in the photo shoot: Marlon Moore, a 2022 graduate from Cleveland, OH, Edwin Linares a sophomore from Manassas, Va., Arriana Manzay, a junior from Lubbock, Texas, and Christian Montague, graduate student from Dayton, Ohio.



Marlon Moore



Photos by Macie Roy www.instagram.com/mediabymace

Arriana Manzay says that her hair is more than a protective style. “I have purple in my hair. The color represents my Granny, who had pancreatic cancer. Purple is the color for pancreatic cancer.”



Christian Montague shared that he has been stereotyped because of his hair. Once, at a party, a fellow partygoer assumed he smoked cannabis when he does not. He said this is just one example of stereotyping and discrimination.

CROWN ACT from page 28

the Wheeling Human Rights Commission leaders have been eager to work with organizers to move the legislation forward. The HRC voted unanimously to support the CROWN Act, and chair Rev. Ralph Duncan addressed the City Council at the end of October, urging them to pass the ordinance. Councilwoman Ketchum told WTRF, “it is really important that we are setting a tone in the city of Wheeling that says you are welcome here... and we want to make sure we are reflecting that in the way we be-

have, but also in the way we govern.”

The 2022 legislative session proved to be more of the same in Charleston.

Legislators proposed bills that would either outright overturn the local CROWN ordinances or provide a pathway for that outcome. At one point, it was rumored that Del. Brandon Steele, chair of the House Government Organization Committee and the chronic gatekeeper to this bill, would allow the CROWN Act bill to run. Instead, it was proposed that supporters of the CROWN bill would be forced to accept the demise of the state Human Rights

Commission as a political trade-off for the CROWN act. Activists called BS on that, and the bill never made it on the agenda.

It’s time for state lawmakers to get on board and provide this protection for all West Virginia citizens. No one should face discrimination for the way they wear their hair, and this legislation is a critical step toward creating a welcoming and inclusive future for all in the Mountain State. In the meantime, it has become even more evident that politics, organizing, and elections at a local level play a vital role in achieving good policy.

U.S. HOUSE
DISTRICT 1

LACY WATSON



THEY WON THEIR PRIMARIES

The West Virginia Democratic Party Black Caucus has information on how to support these candidates. The WVBC has a new website, wvdpblackcaucus.org

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WARD 3
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CHARLESTON CITY COUNCIL -
WARD 4
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WARD 6
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ARTS meets INNOVATION

Written by Adam Payne

Photography by Maxwell Shavers

“Have you ever heard of the WVU LaunchLab?”

“Yeah, uhm, aren’t you that place where engineering students go to 3D print?”

This routine interaction with interested West Virginia University students remained too commonplace for too long at the Morris L. Hayhurst LaunchLab. All too often, potential student clients are misinformed that the applied innovation center is reserved solely for business students or engineers. But that narrative is quickly changing with a little help from artists.

The April Arts Festival and Pitch Competition shattered the preconceptions of who the space is designed for as dozens of writers, choreographers, fashion designers, filmmakers, directors, creators, and makers submitted their ideas. In doing so and since, a number of emerging artists have solidified their place at the table as innovators.

These creative pioneers are doing the heavy lifting in redefining what “qualifies” as innovation by showcasing that a new work or experimental project holds equal merit against traditional products or businesses. The difference is, for artists, oftentimes silicone molds are swapped for a swatch of fabric or smatters of ink, and nuts & bolts for bodies & voices. And it is for that reason, many artists hadn’t considered themselves or weren’t considered by the majority to be at the forefront of innovation.

Morgan Widmer is one of these entrepreneurial artist case studies. After watching a documentary in one of her classes on the wasteful and abusive nature of the fashion industry, Widmer decided to use her fashion design major for a common good. In crafting her final collection at WVU, Widmer strove to confront these malpractices directly. “I did mine with all deadstock fabric, which is fabric that would otherwise go in landfills from designers throughout the fashion industry,” Widmer said. “So my collection was sustainable and made of scraps and then I just continued, and I just want to keep doing it.”

Rapidly, Widmer transformed this collection into her ever-growing brand Mogania. As she discovered the resource network available at the LaunchLab, the transition from artist to entrepreneur just made sense. Widmer said, “I’ve always been very into entrepreneurship. Even when I was little, I was like, ‘I want to have my own business.’”

With fearless determination, Widmer entered the sustainability brand into her first competition. “This is my idea. I’m going to come in and say what I say,” Widmer said, “I didn’t really know who was going to be there, so I didn’t have a lot of thoughts to scare me.” And it is through that determination Widmer went on to succeed in a number of pitches while continually cementing the value art can add to innovation.

So with dozens of business meetings, hours spent perfecting her pitch, video editing, and even an editorial photo shoot provided by the LaunchLab, Widmer is well on her way to runways around the world.

“I don’t think I’d be even close to where I am right now, trying to do it full time, had I not come to the LaunchLab. So I’m really thankful for all the opportunities that it gave me,” Widmer said.



Morgan
Widmer



Sarah
Beth
Ealy

Sarah Beth Ealy is another one of those artist-meets-innovators. She started her innovation journey with her business venture Big Stories for Little MountainEars, a collective of actors that travel around the state's schools or host events portraying famous Appalachian figures. Ealy took special attention in selecting characters that represented diverse perspectives for the Mountain State. One example of such is "Hidden Figure," Katherine Johnson portrayed by actress Sydnee Miller. With the goal of casting a more holistic and stereotype-defying light on her home state's reputation, she pitched her idea in three different pitch competitions to bring those Big Stories to life. But, the experience wasn't always easy.

"It's a lot easier if your product is like a tool to show the tool and show how the tool is impactful when you have it in your hands," Ealy said, "But with art, it's a lot more abstract how art is impactful. So I think what I tried to do was to show that impact through the pitch."

In her pitching experience, Ealy was able to take her

arts background, utilize the LaunchLab team to learn the business side of things, and become an innovator without realizing it.

"I still don't really consider myself to be an innovator because that word is kind of daunting," Ealy said. "But what the projects did encourage me to do was to learn how to delegate tasks and to organize a team." After conceptualizing her business, Ealy quickly developed a secondary project to showcase in the April Arts Festival called Chasm. Now nearing the end of filming, this performance art short film explores themes of mental illness, identity and loss. By scoring funding through that festival, Ealy was able to not only assemble a team, but pay other artists for their work. If not for the event, Ealy said Chasm might not have even been feasible to create.

Now, as Ealy scored another top prize in the Women Innovate Pitch Competition, she has undeniably left her mark as an innovator and continues to blur the lines between artist and entrepreneur with each endeavor.

"Business is similar to art in that you have an idea that you make into something that's tangible, right?" Ealy said.



Finally, Maxwell Shavers, a native of Charleston, West Virginia and a former LaunchLab photographer who captured those artists' visions, is of course an artistic innovator. As a photographer and designer, Shavers's time at the LaunchLab and in his freelance career has proven his dedication to uplifting other voices and other creatives.

Maxwell Shavers

Shavers specializes in portraiture and visual storytelling while being no stranger to a wide variety of creative art forms. Whether it be working a wedding or crafting an unconventional editorial, Shavers continues to defy expectations and build compelling visual narratives. He is now based in Tulsa, OK and is open to "making something meaningful together." Visit his website maxwellshavers.com for booking and more information.

BLACK WEST VIRGINIANS ARE AT A UNIQUE DISADVANTAGE WHEN IT COMES TO MENTAL HEALTH



ILLUSTRATION BY KELSIE DOWLING

Barriers that impact mental health for Black West Virginians include a scarcity of Black mental health professionals and mental health resources, stigma, lack of proper mental health education, and more. Black therapists discuss how we can change the culture surrounding mental health.

BY HAADIZA OGWUDE

Mental health is defined as an individual's emotional, psychological, or social well-being. Mental health impacts every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. According to the National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI), approximately 21 percent of U.S. adults experienced mental illness, 5.6 percent of U.S. adults experienced severe mental illness, and 6.7 percent of U.S. adults experienced a co-occurring substance use disorder and mental illness in 2020. Additionally, 16.5 percent of U.S. youth aged 6-17 experienced a mental health disorder in 2016.

The African American community, in particular, suffers from an increased rate of mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression. The department of psychiatry at Columbia University, reported that African Americans are 20 percent more likely to experience serious mental health problems, such

as Major Depressive Disorder or Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Additionally, young Black adults (ages 18-25) also experience higher rates of mental health problems and lower mental health resource utilization rates than young white adults and older Black adults.

Data also indicates that West Virginia consistently rates among states with the highest percentage of people experiencing mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. In a ranking of America's healthiest communities by U.S. News and World Report, West Virginia was reported as having one of the nation's highest rates of deaths of despair which include fatalities attributed to suicide, drug overdoses, and alcohol-related disease.

In the healthiest communities ranking, counties received a mental health score. The average score among West Virginia counties was approximately 28

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out of 100. The five lowest-scoring counties for mental health were all in West Virginia.

Like many Black communities in the United States, West Virginia's poor mental health stems from a complex mix of problems, including high poverty rates and substance abuse and a culture of independence that stigmatizes psychological help. Due to this troubling data, many Black mental health professionals in West Virginia believe that Black West Virginians are at a significant disadvantage when dealing with mental health issues than their white counterparts or even black counterparts from other states.

"I would generally say that Appalachians are at a unique disadvantage. And then under that, African Americans would be a little bit more disadvantaged. Number one because for some of them, there's still a stigma attached to seeking out mental health, the availability of affordable mental health, anything to deal with them getting there, and working around a work schedule, a family schedule, all those things," says Maureen Dillard, school counselor at West Virginia Schools of Diversion and Transitions.

Some barriers that impact mental health for Black West Virginians include a scarcity of Black mental health professionals and mental health resources, stigma, lack of proper mental health education, poverty, racism, substance abuse, and incarceration.

William Berkeley, the owner of Recovery U, a Black-owned, male-only substance abuse treatment center, says that substance abuse disorders and mental illnesses are co-occurring issues for many clients. However, the stigma surrounding therapy, drug use, and incarceration often prevent many people from getting the mental and physical health services they need. For African Americans, it's even more difficult because those who have been convicted of drug-related crimes don't have the same opportunities to receive treatment as their white counterparts.

"I think a lot of people with mental illness don't get diagnosed, and they don't even know they have mental illness or don't care they got mental illness. Then they go to substances to offset that mental illness, it makes them feel better, or they don't have the capacity not to use these substances in some kind of way... I think the judicial system is a little bit at fault, in that I think blacks don't get the same opportunities to come to treatment, as much as the white criminal defendants might get to come to treatment," Berkeley says.

Despite the prevalence of substance abuse in

Black-Owned Behavioral Health Agencies and Treatment Centers

For a list of active mental health resources for Black West Virginians, including Black-owned behavioral health agencies or agencies that employ Black therapists, go online to BlackbyGod.org. The list also includes some non-traditional therapeutic resources.

West Virginia, the lack of Black mental health professionals, resources, and mental health education seems to be the biggest concern for Gina Ogwude, Owner and CEO of West Virginia Family Support & Rehabilitation.

"I think West Virginians, in general, are at a disadvantage because of lack of resources, lack of professionals in the area... It's hard for West Virginia to even attract professionals, and then you break it down into minority professionals. That's even twice as hard because, first of all, minorities, especially Black Americans, make up such a small percentage of the population, to begin with. Then to find maybe a very small percentage, of an already small percentage, that went to college to be able to provide mental health services. That's even harder," Ogwude says.

Ogwude believes that to address many of the mental health barriers that impact the lives of Black West Virginians, we must educate ourselves and our peers on the realities of mental health.

Ogwude says that providers, especially, have a responsibility to foster a relationship with the communities they're serving and normalize seeking help. Providers, especially white providers, also have a responsibility to educate themselves on the communities they serve to help clients whose backgrounds differ from their own.

"I guess by making our services available, and making sure I'm bringing awareness to the community that we're here, especially as African American therapists, because there's so few of us out there, that a lot of people in the community don't even know we

exist... So you know, we have a responsibility as professionals to reach out to the community that needs us... A lot of ways we could do that: visiting schools, visiting churches, involving ourselves in community activities, bringing awareness to our availability," Ogwude advises.

Dr. Kristi Williams Dumas, a forensic psychologist and owner of Dumas Psychology Center agrees that stigma and a lack of black mental health providers are two of the most prevalent barriers that impact Black West Virginians from seeking mental health treatment. Dumas uses her TikTok account (@unstuckpsychologists) as a platform to spread mental health awareness.

"So the number one thing that impacts the Black community is the stigma behind mental health and getting mental health services, we definitely need to start normalizing people not being in the best mental health state, and we need to normalize people getting help. So that is the biggest barrier to healing and treatment in the black community is the stigma that is on mental health and receiving services. The other thing that I think is very challenging is the fact that in southern West Virginia, we have very few practitioners of color," Dumas explains.

Dumas traces the history of mental health stigma in the Black communities back to slavery. Historically, Black Americans have been brutalized and disenfranchised in this country, which has created a shared generational trauma which impacts how we deal with emotional issues to this day.

"I think it comes from slavery and before where we were not treated as human beings. So we were socialized, to not feel to not acknowledge pain... We were socialized to suck it up... So we, for generations, have been crippled in terms of being able to appropriately express our feelings and our emotions. And so we keep that locked up inside, and poor mental health turns into poor physical health. And so I think that it is something that we've been socialized with and expected to do for years. And now that we're to the place where we realize just how mentally impaired and physically unhealthy it is. We don't know what to do about it or how to go about it the right way," Dumas says.

In addition, the Black church has historically been a significant proponent of mental health stigma. Prayer and unwavering faith in God are often the answers to mental health struggles within the Black community.

"You will hear preachers and pastors get up over the pulpit, 'you don't need that psychotropic medica-

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MENTAL HEALTH

Study shows suicide rates for Black girls doubled during pandemic

BY KABREA JAMES

The suicide rate amongst Black girls doubled in comparison to that of Black boys since the start of the pandemic, Dr. Tami Benton, M.D. revealed during a lecture at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia in May of 2022.

Benton, who is the psychiatrist-in-chief at the hospital, observed suicidal behaviors in Black youth ages 12-17 years old from February 21, 2020 to March 20, 2020 and February 21, 2021 to March 20, 2021. Through a study titled 'Suicide and Suicidal Behaviors Amongst Minoritized Teens,' Benton found that Black boy suicide rates increased by 3.7 percent while Black girl suicide rates were 50.6 percent higher than the previous year.

The study explained that systemic racism, such as neighborhood violence, economic insecurity and historical trauma contribute to symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress in Black youth. Exposure to traumatic videos and other online posts are additional factors. It is not uncommon for youth to see videos of Black people being killed by the police or, more specific to Black girls, posts bashing them and emphasizing how undesirable they are. The study also unveiled that Black adolescents experience five racially discriminate events a day, including micro-aggressions.

Black girls also battle with a specific brand of intersectionality, known as 'misogynoir.' Coined by Black feminist Moya Bailey in 2010, misogynoir is defined as "a dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against Black women." Black women simultaneously battle misogyny and racism day-in and day-out.

Benton went on to explore the possibility that current psychiatric screening tools may not be adequate in assessing Black suicide risk. Crisis counselor and Beckley native Arianna Logwood said the stigma surrounding mental health in the Black community may play into this blockage.

"I don't think the Black youth are being open about their mental health because they feel misunderstood and stuck," Logwood said. "I feel that within Black



Photos by Perry Bennet

A study titled "Suicide and Suicidal Behaviors Amongst Minoritized Teens" found that Black boy suicide rates increased by 3.7 percent and Black girl suicide rates were 50.6 percent higher than the previous year.

culture, when opening up slightly, instead of receiving empathy and help, you receive statements such as 'people have it worse,' 'be thankful' or 'just pray about it.' These statements make it seem as if their struggles are something they should just be able to 'get over.' So with this being said, I would say that

young Black girls generally feel as though they need to remain strong and push through tough times."

Nakia Austin, who is a licensed counselor and co-founder of The Healing House in Charleston, said she also recognizes the trope of the "strong, Black woman" as damaging to the mental health of Black girls and women. See story, next page.

"We witnessed our mothers and grandmothers live that narrative rather than properly heal, process and move forward," Austin said. "You are more than what happened to you and just because you're resilient doesn't mean you're healed."

Austin said she feels Black girls having the option to receive treatment from someone who "looks like them and sounds like them" could help remove this stigma, as well as research and funding being invested into our healing.

"I don't have a particular answer," Austin said. "But there's a million places we can start. People stay away from topics of race because it's uncomfortable, but we need to have these uncomfortable conversations."

Logwood said her own experiences with Black providers were helpful and fulfilling to her.

"I very much enjoy having Black women as caregivers, personally," Logwood said. "I feel that I can talk the way I normally do and not try to explain something like I'm writing an essay. When I'm attempting to explain my situation to a Black caregiver, I know I am not going to be portrayed as a 'loud, angry, Black woman' and will feel my concerns are addressed properly. It's a more organic and natural experience."

The study stated that familial support, school connectedness, stable finances and higher levels of racial and ethnic identification were protective factors for Black youth. Logwood also feels that it's important to provide better support systems, resources and education for mental health.

"We need to teach self-love and how to embrace their experience," Logwood said. "Also, empathizing and providing love and safe spaces. It's about letting them know that they have to take care of themselves first."

The Healing House takes holistic approach to trauma recovery

BY KABREA JAMES

Licensed counselor and certified life coach Nakia Austin understands that healing looks different for everyone. As the co-founder of The Healing House in Charleston, Austin said she hopes to provide the tools women need to improve their lives after experiencing trauma.

The Healing House is a behavioral health program dedicated to serving and empowering women. The first of its kind in the state, the program offers women of color access to their unique path to healing through a holistic approach.

"We don't realize the magnitude of what we've experienced," Austin said, "because we are resilient and we moved on. I want to provide a new lens for women and men of color to see their trauma and their treatment. What do you as an individual need in your healing process?"

Although The Healing House is open to all women, at-risk and low-income women are priority. The

program will pair women with case managers who can assist them all the way across what Austin describes as "the spectrum of trauma".

"We want to help women not only heal but rebuild in all areas of life," Austin said, "That can be through financial aid, parenting assistance or other services."

Austin said the program is also looking to combat blockages between women of color and the treatment of substance use disorder. Some of these barriers include feeling alienated in recovery and also facing criminalization in their pursuit of seeking help.

"Cultural competency is very important," Austin said, "There are a lot of disparities and gaps in treatment here," Austin said, "SUD, trauma and beyond."

The Healing House hopes to be up and running by late summer or early fall, as Austin said the program still needs the community's help with renovations and the donation of household supplies as well as monetary donations.

For more information, contact the Healing House at (681) 205-8661 or visit www.thehealinghouseinc.org/about-thh/

Licensed counselor and certified life coach Nakia Austin, left, and Michael D. Austin II of The Healing House.



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tion, you know, you don't need that medication. All you need is Jesus.' No, pray to Jesus while you take that medication. But so many times, our leaders and our places of worship also perpetuate the stigma of mental health...and that needs to stop, we have to, again, normalize people having faith, but also needing help," Dumas continues.

However, Rev. James Patterson, CEO of Partnership of African American Church (PAAC), says it is possible for spiritual counseling and clinical treatment to work in tandem.

"We ought to start accepting and putting systems in place in the congregation to help people with that. And the first thing is, is that we accept and we let it be known and published in the congregation, that we accept the fact that there are mental health problems. And this is our system or our process, in this congregation, in terms of helping a congregant, or church member, deal with the mental health challenge," Patterson says.

PAAC operates a prevention and recovery wellness center on Charleston's west side and a Women's Residential Facility in Institute, WV. Through his work with PAAC and his experience as a minister, Patterson says that he has witnessed how religion and psychology can work together to address an individual's needs.

"There are Christian therapists. There are therapists that go at therapy from a Christian or from a faith-based perspective. So the minimum thing that the church could do would be to know who those therapists are, know who those mental health practitioners are, and have a referral system for the congregation," Patterson states.

Despite her reservations, Dumas agreed that the church could work with mental health professionals in dealing with the psychological

issues that may affect their parishioners, provided that the clergy receives the proper training.

"I do think partnerships and those types of coalitions are needed. They can be a huge benefit to the community, as long as people are trained to do the work," Dumas states.

Patterson agrees with the other mental health professionals that normalizing mental illness is the most significant step we can take as a community to address mental health concerns.

"I think a lot of it has to do with education within the community itself. It has to do as well with us, encouraging our young people to go into this discipline as a professional. And then it has to do with us being accepting of our own folks, and helping them and trying to provide some services for them because we understand the culture, we understand the history," Patterson explains.

Despite the potential progress that normalization could make towards eradicating stigma, West Virginia still does not have the amount of mental health resources to meet the needs of its people.

"We are fighting against a state legislature who does not have Black people in the forefront of their agenda. In fact, I know delegates who have dismissed some of the bills that would affect, very proportionately affect — Black people. And have decided that they're not important because there's not enough of us here," Dumas says.

Haadiza Ogwude is a recent graduate of the double master's degree program in journalism and global mass communication from Ohio University and Universität Leipzig. She is from Parkersburg, WV, where she currently resides. She is related to Gina Ogwude, CEO and owner of West Virginia Family Support & Rehabilitation Services, who was quoted in the article. Black By God discloses this information in an effort to uphold journalistic integrity and transparency.

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THE CHANGE AGENT:

HUNTINGTON'S FIRST BLACK POLICE CHIEF VS. THE OVERDOSE CAPITAL

BY KYLE VASS

When Karl Colder became Huntington's first Black police chief in November 2021, he was three years into his retirement as a senior agent for the Drug Enforcement Administration — a major selling point for the city. Colder's arrival came at a time when headlines of tragedy like "America's overdose capital sees 27 overdoses in four hours" were shifting to those of praise for a city's "pioneering approach" to the overdose epidemic.

Moving away from the traditional war-on-drugs approach, Huntington developed a Quick Response Team that wrapped people who had experienced an overdose in support, linking them with services in the community. The city, under Mayor Steve Williams, had cut overdoses by 40 percent and drug-related homicide by 70 percent. No stranger to mixing it up himself, Colder credits the mayor's vision and success in revitalizing the city as his inspiration for moving to Huntington.

In his 25-year- career with the agency, Colder went from being a field agent to a supervisor with the DEA's Office of Professional Responsibility — overseeing internal investigations into the conduct of its agents and supervisors. Eventually Colder be-

The obstacle is to get people to trust you — guess what, how many people ever thought that they would have a Black chief in Huntington?

Karl Colder,

Huntington's first Black police chief

came a "special agent in charge," overseeing all the agency's operations for Washington, D.C. and three states, including West Virginia.

Despite the agency's role in the war on drugs and documented incidents of racism, Colder used his rise through its ranks to advocate for change. His retirement had been bookended by two incidents where he criticized the DEA publicly for not addressing failures within the agency. The first incident brought him to West Virginia to address his employer's failure to keep West Virginians safe.

"When [Huntington] had those 27 overdoses, people were calling me saying 'What are you guys doing?' And I say, 'Well, we're doing what we can,

but we need more people here'" On his visit, Colder told Pulitzer Prize winning journalist West Virginian Eric Eyre that the DEA had failed to bring leadership to the state. Eyre had led an investigation showing millions of prescription pain pills had been shipped to small-town pharmacies all across the state and wanted answers. And, Colder gave them.

In his interview with Eyre, Colder criticized the agency's history of underfunding operations in West Virginia — the state with the highest opioid overdose in the nation. "[The DEA] had no leadership in West Virginia. We had none," adding that people who held his job in the past never bothered engaging communities in the state. Along with the frank admission of his agency's shortcoming, he revealed a plan to expand the agency in the state and better monitor the distribution of opioids through the state — a promise he made good on.

The second incident where he spoke out against the agency came two years after he retired. This time, he drew on his experience at the DEA's Office of Professional Responsibility and signed a letter along with 75 other former agents saying the agency had failed to address instances of systemic racism predominately against its Black employees. According

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COMMENTARY ON THE AHMAUD ARBERY TRIAL

‘Long, dirty toenails’

BY DR. GREGG SUZANNE FERGUSON

Death humbles us all, and death comes for us all. For that reason, in every culture speaking ill of the dead is taboo, if not amoral. When the deceased is an innocent victim, speaking ill of them is especially abominable.

This sentiment was disregarded by Laura Hogue, one of the defense attorneys for Gregory McMichael, who was convicted with his son, Travis McMichael, in the death of Ahmaud Arbery, a jogger who was chased down, shot and killed in Brunswick, Ga.

Was Ms. Hogue hoping that the jurors would be influenced by her description of the murder victim as a young athlete “in his khaki shorts with no socks to cover his long, dirty toenails,” and acquit her client? Yes.

From a critical race theory perspective, the saying, “Good fences make good neighbors,” enforces the legacy of racism in America through real estate, where “good fences” ensured the preservation of white identity and privilege. After centuries of discrimination in home ownership, Black people who finally got through were confronted with the “good fences” drawn up by legislators to include impassable barriers that isolated and constrained them. Segregation was built into the physical environment in America, and in Georgia that was the reality for the two communities brought together by Mr. Arbery’s death.

Separating Satilla Shores where Mr. Arbery was attacked and killed, and Fancy Bluff, the Black community where he lived, is a four-lane highway. Although median incomes and home values were the same, the racial diversity was different. But, in the world view of Gen Zers like Mr. Arbery, those cultural divisions were as concerning as a swipe on a screen. Yet, on Feb. 23, 2020, dashing across Route 17, he breached the “good fences” rule and faced the judgment of white watchmen enraged by his audacity to run freely.

Ms. Hogue described Mr. Arbery as a trespasser. She assumed the nearly all-white jury would feel the collective racist twinge reminding them of the dreams of people like her father, who, “wanted to



Gregg Ferguson is the niece of “Cap” Ferguson., story, next page. She shared the family photo of her Grandfather, Daniel, center; her Uncle Gurnett “Cap,” left, and her Uncle William, right,

in WWI. She said, “Uncle Cap was the Business Mind; Uncle William was the Artist Mind and Big Daddy was the Academic Mind. All three had a huge influence on my family and me.”

see his family ... surrounded by a community of people who cared about each other.”

She contrasted her bucolic, “Manifest Destiny” vision with a racist psychoanalysis of Mr. Arbery, including his intent: “Can anyone believe that Ahmaud Arbery was doing a ‘lookie-loo’? ... There was no legitimate reason for Ahmaud Arbery to be plundering there. ... He was a recurring nighttime intruder.”

What Mr. Arbery was, is a dreamer, perhaps envisioning his role in creating this reality for himself and for other families on that construction site. His dreams of being an electrician were manifesting as he stood in his future.

Ms. Hogue argued Mr. Arbery’s presence was “frightening and unsettling” and he should have known how he was perceived. Her racism rationalized that “he knew why he was being chased — because he was guilty.”

Guilty of the irrevocable freedom to jog in a country built on the backs of his ancestors?

The revocation of freedom for Africans in America compelled millions to risk their lives. This runaway problem had Congress passing the Fugitive Slave Act in 1793 and later extend incentives for re-capture to vigilante slave catchers — where their feet could be chopped off to prevent them from running away again.

Ms. Hogue explained that “police can’t be everywhere. ... a good neighborhood is always policing itself.”

The defendants were those vigilantes, mounting their F-150 trucks with Confederate plates to chase down this Black man, Mr. Arbery, as he ran away. To police, they were confident in their shared oath — his death as collateral to an attempted capture.

Ms. Hogue concluded, “He died because for whatever inexplicable illogical reason, instead of staying where he was. ... He had to avoid being captured that day and being arrested by the police, he chose to fight. He. Chose. To. Fight.”

Yes, he chose to fight for his freedom, with no socks to cover his feet. His toes were mentioned to arouse a racist archetype symbolizing the duty of the enslavers.

Every American student should be able to infer that Ms. Hogue expected Mr. Arbery to surrender to these 21st century slave catchers ... and then what?

It’s another reason American students need to be taught through the lens of critical race theory.

Dr. Gregg Ferguson is a West Virginia native currently residing in Hampton, Va. She is the executive director Mothers of Diversity America and is the daughter of West Virginia Human Rights Commission Judge, the late Gail M. Ferguson, and community activist and educator, Warne L. Ferguson. She is a mother, sister and friend to people who serve their communities with an unwavering dedication to issues of equity and social justice. Her article was originally printed in The Richmond Free Press and was reprinted with permission from the author.



BLACK TRAILBLAZER: 'CAP' FERGUSON

By Maria Sisco and Stan Bumgardner | Goldenseal Magazine

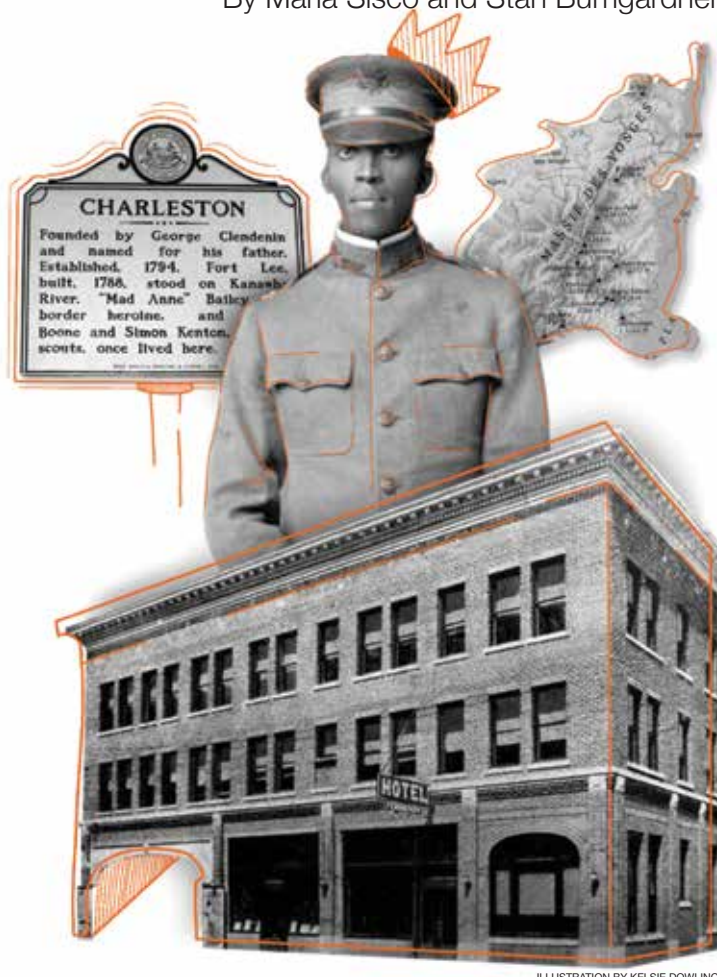


ILLUSTRATION BY KELSIE DOWLING

Sidewalk memory



At the site where The Ferguson once stood, there's a commemorative tile. Find it with the help of Clio

Read the story at
blackbygod.org

Goldenseal, the magazine of West Virginia traditional life, is produced by the Department of Arts, Culture and History and takes its stories from the recollections of West Virginians living throughout the state.

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to one news report, Black DEA agents who have filed suit with the agency of incidents over the years could be owed up to \$12 million in attorney fees alone from the agency, not including any potential damages they could be awarded.

In a letter addressed to then U.S. Attorney General William Barr, Colder and his former colleagues wrote, "Unfortunately, it has taken the despicable killing of George Floyd to awaken the collective conscience of the American people." The letter added, "For the highest-ranking law enforcement officer in the country to be blinded to this notion is inconceivable and will continue to have detrimental consequences."

At the time, Colder told the Associated Press, "You still don't have African Americans in positions to really monitor and ensure things are equal."

Colder wasn't shy about the work cut out for him. In an interview with local press after he was hired as the city's new Chief of Police, he said "My role as a police chief validates that a Black man can lead a police department that is 90 percent white. I believe we can do a better job letting the public know we are here to support the entire community. Whatever barriers may have existed before, I am committed to putting in the work to erase them. That includes getting to know this community better and looking internally at hiring practices, including recruitment strategies that bring about more diversity throughout our department."

In the short time he's been in Huntington, the community has been top priority for Colder, who spends his free time volunteering as a basketball coach at a local youth center. Colder said he hopes he can use his position as a Black leader in Huntington to expand programming offered in local youth centers, because there were ones just like these that played a pivotal role in his own childhood. "I'll never forget how much of an impact [community centers] were to the Black community because it gave the young kids a place to go and to play athletics."

Colder's penchant for addressing racial disparities and embracing evidence-based solutions is on-brand for a city that has begun to do the impossible: turn the tide of the overdose epidemic in the state hardest hit by it. "The obstacle is to get people to trust you guess what, how many people ever thought that they would have a Black chief in Huntington? I have to, I have to use that to my advantage to show people that this can be done. And the show to show young people, young people that they can do this."

SCULPTING OF NATIONAL TREASURES

Excellent images

Frederick Hightower has spent a lifetime turning his passions into works of art

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CHRIS SLATER

Frederick Hightower didn't know who Katherine Johnson was in 2016. "Hidden Figures," starring Taraji P. Henderson as Johnson — a NASA mathematician whose contributions to early space exploration had largely been forgotten — was currently in theaters, but Hightower had not yet seen it.

The multi-disciplined artist who owns the Excellent Image Creation studio had been asked to make a sculpture of Johnson to be set outside her alma mater, West Virginia State University. After viewing the film, Hightower knew it was a project he needed to take on.

"If you saw the movie, you saw there was just a real genius about her," Hightower said. "People were going to space with her mathematical routes, but nobody really knew about her at the time. And she graduated from WVSU."

Johnson, who died in 2020 at age 101, was born in White Sulfur Springs, and is credited with helping get the first astronaut into orbit around the moon, and later the first moon landing. Johnson attended high school at age 10, and at 18 graduated from what was then West Virginia State College with degrees in mathematics and French.

The statue process took about a year — six months to sculpt from clay and another six months for a foundry to create the bronze bust.

"It was such a blessing to be able to honor the late Katherine Johnson — for the majority of her life she was pretty much unknown, and I just thought it was wonderful that they were able to make the movie that brought notoriety to her," Hightower said.

Hightower was pleased that Johnson was still alive to see her recognitions acknowledged — including a 2015 Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama.

"On her 100th birthday, we were able to unveil the statue and of course, the national media and everything was there," Hightower said. "The greatest highlight was just seeing her be recognized, and to realize that I was able to help make that happen."

Hightower said that people usually don't get a stat-



Frederick Hightower stands at the pulpit of ALL Nations Revival Center, in Dunbar, in front of the religious mural he created. He has said that his mural is not a puzzle, but there is a "mystical vibe to it."

ue — or any other sort of recognition — until after their death.

"I think that's a little bit of a disappointment," Hightower said. "I mean, if a person is renowned, particularly if they're older, you know, why not? Why not celebrate them? If possible, let them see it."

The Johnson sculpture helped Hightower realize that was where he wanted to focus his artistic endeavors. It's one of many outlets for a man who has spent a lifetime harnessing his creative energies.

'My dad was a pastor and my grandpa was a pastor'

Hightower does not look or sound like he is pushing 60. The 58-year-old was born in West Virginia

and spent parts of his youth living in Virginia. He has been married for 34 years to his wife Michelle, and they have four children and three grandchildren. He currently lives in the Dunbar area, but his journey started in Madison, in Boone County.

"I grew up in the late '60s, early '70s and I had a real good childhood," Hightower said. "Madison was a small town, everybody knew everybody."

Religion was an important part of Hightower's life growing up, and still is. He has been a preacher since his early 20s. It was a family tradition.

"My dad was a pastor and my grandpa was a pastor — we're Baptist preachers — and I grew up around ministry and became a pastor myself," Hightower

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EXCELLENT IMAGES from page 42

said. "It's kind of something that was passed down."

After filling in once for a departing pastor in college, the calling became too great for Hightower to ignore. Hightower began his pastor work in earnest in 1988, and he oversaw the ALL Nations Revival Center, in Dunbar.

"From a personal conviction, I think anytime you can help people, it's rewarding," Hightower said. "They say that the number one source of peace you can have is helping other people. That definitely, for me, on a spiritual basis, I feel like it's what God called me to do. He called me to the ministry so I answered the call. That's probably the main reason that I minister — to just obey of the call of the Lord."

His two passions have been combined in the large mural on the wall of his church, which serves as a dramatic backdrop for his sermons.

"I just felt that the Lord wanted a big mural back there — I'm still working on it," Hightower said. "After finishing one side, we're about to finish the other, and then we're wanting to go all the way around the church walls because it goes all the way around the sanctuary."

The mural has been a work in progress for the last couple years.

"I will call it a giant illustration that tells a story, and that is the second coming of Christ," Hightower said. "I don't want to call it a puzzle, but it's sort of a symbolic mystery, I guess — people say they see faces out there. It has sort of a mystical kind of vibe to it."

'I think that the African American legacy in this nation should be celebrated'

Hightower's mother said that he could draw before he could talk.

The first time he remembers showing an artistic flair was a contest he won in the third grade for drawing a picture of Snoopy. It was in high school when he realized a career in art was something to pursue.

While he technically graduated from WVSU, the majority of his higher education came from Marshall University and Virginia Commonwealth University, in Richmond. His grandmother's declining health prompted a move back to West Virginia from Richmond, and he hasn't left.

His work in the church, coupled with getting married and raising a family led to his artistic endeavors being put on the back burner.

"I would say 2005 was when I decided to start doing artwork on a professional basis — I just felt like this was something that I had a degree in, and I hadn't really utilized it, you know," Hightower said. "I decided to pick



The lobby of ALL Nations Revival Center in Dunbar, houses some of Hightower's creative works, including sculptures and paintings. Hightower's current project is a statue of world-renowned Grammy-award winning musician Bill Withers, a native son Beckley.

it up and mess with it for a little bit, and it blossomed from there."

Hightower started out in portrait painting, and within the last five years, things took a turn to where sculpting is his primary concentration. Aside from one beginner sculpting class in college, Hightower has no other formal training.

More sculpting works followed after Johnson, including Fanny Jackson Coppin, an early proponent for women's rights who died in 1913, and Marshall basketball great Hal Greer, a member of the NBA Hall of Fame who died in 2018 and is considered one of the greatest players of the 1960s.

While his major sculpting works feature historical Black figures, Hightower said that is not his intended goal — but the significance is not lost on him.

"I am a great history buff, as well as being an African American pastor of an African American church," Hightower said. "I think that the African American legacy in this nation should be celebrated."

Hightower has been pleased to see an increased public desire for recognition over the last two decades.

"It's always been celebrated very much in the African American community, but in the community at large, I think it was not really emphasized particularly in the area of public sculpture," Hightower said. "I would say in the last 20 years, that has changed quite a bit and I definitely feel like it's a calling. I certainly hope in the future I can do other sculptures of whoever, regardless of what their ethnicity is — I'm not purposely trying to limit myself to just African American figures."

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Hightower's Katherine Johnson statue was unveiled at West Virginia State University in 2018



Photos by Rafael Barker

“PAST TO OUR FUTURE”

3-building mural project is shifting culture in Huntington

All Here Together Productions is partnered with long-time community-based organizations to bring this public art project to life; Unlimited Future Inc, Ebenezer Day Care Center, Positive People Association in the J.W. Scott Center in Huntington, W.Va. Mural #2 was created by artist Betsy Casañas. Ursulette Ward, Executive Director of Unlimited Future Inc. speaks at the sedication celebration Sunday, May 22, 2022.



Each mural has a central character. Mural #2 centers a Black woman quilting “The Block”

EXCELLENT IMAGES from page 43

‘You don’t have to be a millionaire or somebody rich to support the arts’

Hightower’s current project is a statue of world-renowned Grammy-award winning musician Bill Withers, a native son of Beckley. The singer of timeless classics such as “Ain’t No Sunshine,” “Lean on Me,” and “Just the Two of Us,” died in 2020 at 81.

“Bill Withers, he’s a national treasure, and he’s a treasure of the African American community — but his legacy and his music goes beyond the African American community,” Hightower said. “He is a treasure for the City of Beckley, seeing that that’s his hometown, and he is an icon of this state. It’s really important for us to recognize and celebrate for our children to show that their greatness and their talent can place them on the world stage.”

Larger than life bronze statues don’t come cheap, and a fundraising campaign is underway for the Withers homage. “It is pretty much in a holding position, so to speak — the clay has been done, and the mold has pretty much been done, but we’re just waiting for the money to come in,” Hightower said.

For the Johnson statue, the average donation was \$20, which Hightower said showed the importance of individuals believing in a project.

Donate to the Bill Withers sculpture

Those interested in donating can reach out to the City of Beckley directly, or inquire through:
frederickhightowerfineart.com

“You don’t have to be a millionaire or somebody rich to support the arts — no gift is too small,” Hightower said.

Hightower sees a bright future ahead of him, with works in varying stages of completion. He can also be reached for commissions, both paintings and smaller sculptures, with more information available on his website.

Marian Anderson, a barrier-breaking Black musician in the first half of the 20th century, is a potential project that has Hightower’s focus. He has submitted a sample to then turn into a larger work that, if selected, would be displayed in Anderson’s hometown of Philadelphia.

There is also much more to do in the Mountain State for Hightower, who has his eyes set on Charles-

ton’s Capitol grounds.

“We have one of the most beautiful Capitol buildings in America, with the gold dome and such tremendous architecture,” Hightower said. “I would like to see an African American sculpture on those Capitol grounds.”

John Henry, an American folk hero celebrated in song and literature, is Hightower’s choice for a Charleston-based statue. Henry is believed to have worked on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway’s Big Bend Tunnel, near Talcott in Summers County. Lore has it that Henry — known for his ability to hammer steel into rock to make way for explosives — died after beating a steam-powered rock-drilling machine in a competition.

A statue of Henry was unveiled in 1972 in Talcott, but Hightower would like to see an updated, higher-quality homage to an icon of the Wild and Wonderful.

“I think a brand new John Henry would be very good on the capitol grounds, and if anybody — politicians or community members — would like to help get behind that, let’s get in touch.”

Chris Slater is a journalist living in Morgantown, West Virginia. In 2016, he won 3rd place for “Best Breaking News Reporting,” which, along with a dollar, will get him a can of Coke. He has no children; it’s for the best.

BECKLEY PRODUCER RE-OPENS RECORDING STUDIO

The Freezer is open

BY CHEYENNE DEBOLT AND
JOHN FADIGA

Hip-hop artist and producer John Fadiga has re-opened an independent recording studio in Beckley and is seeking artist collaborations. The studio closed when the producer moved to Atlanta last year.

“The Freezer” is now open, and Fadiga, also known by his producing name of Freeze Pop, is seeking to work with hip-hop, pop, rock, and country artists. He has worked with regional artists such as: Shelem, Foogiano, Ponce De’leion, Biker’s Fall (Evan Wood Band), Gentrammel, Adam Yokum, Rubberband OG, J-sharp, Neene Incognita, Gardenn, Eastside Sha, Neighborhood Po, SA Bonez, Itz Tenth, Tito Banz, SKF Carter, Phat Jizz, MBA Gramz, and more.

Freeze Pop said re-opening his Beckley studio has been a gradual process after years in the industry.

“I started making beats for other artists after high school,” Fadiga said. “I fell in love with working in the background and helping artists polish their songs.”

Fadiga has been working in West Virginia’s underground hip-hop scene for about 10 years, and a lot of his business comes to him by word of mouth. He said he hasn’t spent much money on advertising. Once he started making a living from his producing talents, his brother suggested he create an LLC. He took the advice and created Paramount Records in 2019.

“Even back in high school, my brother had such a collaborative spirit. He’s the one to encourage people to try recording something, even if they’ve never written anything before,” Shelem said. “To see how he’s grown to become a true facilitator and cultivator of talent in the community is inspiring.”

Fadiga graduated from West Virginia University with a bachelor’s in mechanical engineering in 2019. But he was soon drawn away from the field with a dream of pursuing his true passion.

“Music is what was paramount to me,” Fadiga said. “Music is what my soul was craving at the time. It still is.”

Fadiga has been the artist on the mic and the



Photo credit

Hip-hop artist and producer John Fadiga has re-opened an independent recording studio in Beckley producer.

“Working on both sides of the glass is rare and it provided me with a perspective that few have,” he said.

He spent the last year in Atlanta working at larger studios, witnessing their creative process. While there is more infrastructure and community in the big city, some aspects of that process felt familiar. He decided to open the studio in Beckley to help provide such resources to artists in West Virginia.

“There are plenty of super talented hip-hop artists across West Virginia, who cannot get into the industry because there is no segue to make a viable music career. There aren’t the proper resources,” he said.

Freeze Pop is accepting new clients and looks forward to working with artists outside of the hip-hop genre.

Freeze Pop is also working with the Beckley Art Center to provide recording lessons to the community. Seth Hughes, the Director of Performing Arts at

the Beckley Art Center, said Fadiga came into the Center for guitar lessons. The two began chatting about voice recording classes and Fadiga said he’d love the chance to teach a class.

“I’m looking forward to working with a new instructor. He seems pretty knowledgeable,” Hughes said. “He has a lot to offer the Beckley Art Center and the Beckley community.”

If anyone is interested in participating in Fadiga’s course, you can sign up on beckleyartcenter.com.

If you are interested in working with Freeze Pop, you can reach him at 304-731-5672 or freezerstudio.com.

Cheyenne DeBolt has a bachelor’s in public relations and political science from Marshall University. Currently, she works as a public information officer for the Office of Reference and Information for the West Virginia Legislature.

She is also Shelem’s public relations manager. Contact: cheyennedebolt@gmail.com

BLACK LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

Creating a safe space

BY HAADIZA OGWUDE

Historically, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Americans have been oppressed through harmful laws and prejudice in all spheres of public life. According to a report from the National Public Radio (NPR), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, more than half of LGBTQ+ Americans reported they personally experienced slurs or other offensive comments about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

It only gets worse from there. Half of all the LGBTQ+ people surveyed said they, their friends or their family members “experienced violence, threats, and sexual harassment,” because of their identity. One in six LGBTQ+ people have delayed medical care due to discrimination.

Black LGBTQ+ individuals, in particular, face higher levels of discrimination than their white counterparts. A 2020 survey conducted by the Center for American Progress found this discrimination spurs many Black LGBTQ+ people to alter their behavior to avoid dangerous situations. For instance, the survey found that 1 in 3 Black LGBTQ+ people avoid entering certain public spaces, like stores or restaurants.

The disparities between Black and white LGBTQ+ people can be seen in almost every area of life, from police interactions, to mistreatment in the workplace and frequent discrimination from health care providers. The pervasive discrimination that Black LGBTQ+ people face has led to large-scale economic disparities and significant mental and physical health concerns.

In states like West Virginia, where both LGBTQ+ and Black individuals are a minority, Black LGBTQ+ folk, in particular, have struggled to feel seen and heard in our Appalachian community.

“Especially in West Virginia, we have so many LGBTQ+ people of color that are afraid to be themselves, that are afraid because of the stigmata that they would put on each other here,” said Kasha Snyder, founder and president of the West Virginia Black Pride Foundation.



For more information on the West Virginia Black Pride Foundation, email WVBPfoundation@outlook.com or Kasha@wvbpfoundation.com. Visit their Facebook page @WVBPFFOUNDATION and Instagram @wvbp304.

The West Virginia Black Pride Foundation was founded in December 2021 in Charleston to illuminate the experiences of LGBTQ+ people of color in West Virginia and provide them with a safe space for fellowship.

“I started off in the LGBTQ+ community as a drag queen and entertainer, and I saw the need for representation of people of color in the LGBTQ+ community in West Virginia, not just in Charleston, but all around. But then I also saw the need for community and fellowship,” Snyder explained.

According to the WV Black Pride Foundation website, the organization is focused on making the maximum positive effort for all POC & Trans POC in the LGBTQ+ community. They seek to provide the momentum that aids in effecting change by offering solutions to make a long-lasting difference. The foundation aims to create visibility for Black people within LGBTQ+ spaces and seeks to create visibility for LGBTQ+ people in predominantly Black spaces. For Snyder, it is imperative that the

Black community of West Virginia recognize and support the experiences of their LGBTQ+ members.

“The Black community is so divided because we choose to be. We choose to put this stereotype on ourselves that we have to be this certain way.... You could be anything and be forgiven in the Black community. The one thing you can’t be forgiven for is being gay, and definitely not for being transgender. So that’s why we need this. We walk the streets every day, we do wonderful things for the community, we’re doctors, we’re lawyers, we’re activists, we’re running for mayor, we’re school teachers, we’re all in the community, and we should be looked at no different, and we should be celebrated and praised just like everybody else... So when it comes to trying to bring us together, it’s something that is needed... Because if the LGBTQ+ community and the African American community was coming together, just think about how powerful we can be,” Snyder said.

The foundation is currently run by a small team of individuals, including Snyder, Vice President AJae Flemming, six volunteers, and six members. Though small in numbers, they are significantly impacting the Charleston community. From donating outerwear to local elementary schools to hosting a free Easter egg hunt and cookout for neighborhood kids, the WV Black Pride foundation has been working hard to establish itself as a resource for the community.

“We try to give back to the community as much as we possibly can. And our goal and our vision is to have a safe place, for LGBTQ+ black people to come together and fellowship, maybe work, maybe live if they don’t have a place to live. Maybe we can house them and things like that. Maybe show them a transition, teach them financial literacy, also work with them on basic life skills and things of such nature. We have our work cut out for us, but they didn’t think we was gonna get this far. And we’re here now,” Snyder explained.

The foundation features a life liaison program where individuals can seek the support of a peer in

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FAIRNESS

WEST VIRGINIA



West Virginia's largest LGBTQ civil rights org!

- Registering & educating voters
- Supporting LGBTQ youth in West Virginia schools
- Increasing access to healthcare for transgender people

Celebrate Pride in West Virginia!

Schedule of Events

June 11

Rainbow Formal

Marshall University's Don Morris Room, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. A dance for LGBTQ+ high schoolers and allies to have a safe prom experience. Follow Rainbow Formal West Virginia on Facebook for more details!

Parkersburg Pride — PrideFest

Join Parkersburg Pride on Saturday from Noon to 4 p.m. for an afternoon of music, appearances from your favorite dragqueens, food trucks, vendor exhibits and community. PrideFest will be held at the Parkersburg City Park.

June 18

Fairmont Pride

Join PFLAG Fairmont for Pride Yoga and a Potluck at the East Marion Park. Bring your yoga mats, blankets, drink, and your favorite Summer dish! Fun for all ages. The event will be from Noon to 5 p.m., and yoga will begin at 2 p.m.

June 19

Benefit Drag Brunch for Fairness WV

Join us on Sunday at the Historic Star Theatre in Berkeley Springs for a Pride themed Drag Brunch to benefit Fairness WV. Doors at 11:30 a.m. and showtime is 12:30 p.m. sharp. Tickets are \$40 per person with brunch, \$25 general admission.

Buy tickets online at fairnesswv.org/pride

June 25

Berkeley Springs Pride

A Pride Picnic in the Park, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Berkeley Springs State Park. The event will feature live music by Matt Otis, food trucks, vendors, and more. Participants are encouraged to bring blankets and picnic baskets.

Elkins Pride

Grab a lawn chair and join us at the 4th Annual Pride in the Park from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Elkins City Park. With live music, food, games, and prizes, it's sure to be a good time. Free, family-friendly, and open to the public.

Putnam County Pride

More details will be added as they are available. Follow "Putnam Pride WV" on Facebook for more details as they are announced.

Greenbrier Valley Pride

This event will be held on in front of the college lawn on Church St., between McElheny and Washington St. The event will kick off with a parade from Lee St and Washington St. that will then proceed onto Church St. to begin our celebration. We will have vendors, resource booths, and performances by Queens throughout the region! Event from 3 to 7 p.m.

www.fairnesswv.org



A WILD WOMAN LOVE STORY

BY ANGELICA GILLERAN

Once upon a time, a round-faced girl with curly hair and identity issues was told by someone (that genuinely loved her) that she was not “model pretty” like her sister but that she could be “mother pretty.”

Now, this devastated the little girl because while she had no true ambitions of being a model, she also didn’t want to be a mother. She spent much of her life feeling that she would only be loved as a decoration or because of her reproductive usefulness.

So why had Fates blessed her sister with a slender frame and Esmerelda locks that the world would admire? Only to make her an over-opinionated people pleaser akin to a puzzle you’d find at Gabe’s with pieces that don’t quite fit.

So she told herself lies. And they were good lies, the kind of lies that a girl could believe into womanhood.

She rejected suitors (including the future homecoming king). Telling herself that it was a part of a mean joke designed to humiliate her. She told herself that she was less than average and less than lovable. She became jaded and obsessed with the thought of looking like the girls she envied.

As she got older, she made sure to work in places that kept her on her feet, and she prayed at the church of Hydroxycut daily. And then, as the girl was about to turn 20, something amazing happened! It seemed like the lies were working, and the girl became thinner!

Finally, armed with Bianca Johnson’s fake id, she’d reached the coveted holy grail of love and admiration. FREE DRINKS! “What could be better?” She thought, in between hangovers.

After a while she noticed that a lot could be better! Free drinks and hangovers were okay until the question took on a new meaning...

Something certainly HAD to be better because she didn’t feel loved or even particularly admired. She felt hungry and exhausted all the time. She felt self-conscious and insecure.

Her body was slimmer but in a cold war. Her cycle stopped. She got migraines that lasted for hours. Not to mention her stomach felt fawked, and she didn’t enjoy the company of most of the people buying her drinks.

So the girl committed to new lies and decided she was just not meant to be a “hot girl.” And as luck

would have it, she met a boy working on insecurities that would match her own.

Soon they fell in love with each other’s imperfections, and she plotted ways to support his dreams (because shit, someone might as well get what they want).

Late one night, the boy had a vision of country roads and mountain tops, and because they didn’t know better, they decided to move to West Virginia.

The world got bigger for the girl as she traveled through the strange land. Surrounded on all sides by seemingly more attractive sisters. Still, a wicked sense of humor set in the very FU shape of its borderlines.

She began to see the undeniable beauty of West Virginia, and the girl fell in love again and again as she began to know the native people of this paradoxical place.

The girl made new friends. A beautiful kaleidoscope of new perspectives and personalities that

embraced the girl with open arms. But, ultimately it was the women from West Virginia that saved the girl from her self hate.

The most interesting women in the world live in West Virginia!

She made friends with women that challenged her thinking on why one type of woman should be more valuable than the other. She met women that made her feel loved and admired, and even bought her free drinks.

Then a strange thing happened. The kind of thing that makes your stomach turn. The girl realized that some of these ladies had been living with their own nasty lies. This discovery sent a dagger through her heart.

She realized that generations of women and girls felt small trying to earn their value through their looks.

She thought long and hard, but finally knew what she had to do! She needed to become the woman that leads by example. The woman she so desperately needed in her life.

The woman that uplifts herself and her sisters. She needed to become a loving woman. Loving herself unconditionally and unapologetically. A woman that would protect the wellbeing of her mind, body and soul like something sacred.

Filing her mind with good thoughts and filling her schedule with good people

She longed for more loving, caring, and uplifting women in the world. In fact, she would make it her life’s work. She would shape herself like her adopted state into a middle finger to the thoughts and people that made her question her value.

And so the girl sat at the top of a trail that overlooked the city she loved, thinking of all of her mountain mamas and dreaming about the wild and wonderful woman she would work to become.

Based on a true story.

Proud West Virginia transplant, Angelica Gilleran has been wild and wonderful in the mountain state for seven years. With a record of growth in digital marketing and brand development, Angelica’s skills stem from her belief that in order to excel we must prioritize serving others. In addition to running her two marketing businesses StrongRapport, this lady entrepreneur enjoys spending time with her husband, staying involved with her community, and loving her two fur children.

COOKING CONFIDENTIAL

My story of becoming a restaurant owner is a bit unconventional. Most chefs don't start their culinary education in prison.

My name is Chef Anthony Wilkins, and I am the chef, owner, and founder of Gourmet Fast, located at 709 Ruffner Ave in Charleston.

We bring southern, Appalachian, and Bay Area flavors to you. Favorite menu items are our oxtails, crab dip, fried whiting, and chicken dishes. We run daily specials that offer our guests something not on our standard menu.

I was born and raised in Baltimore, Md., specifically in O'Donnell Heights. On April 27, 1980, the beautiful Sarah Harris and the best basketball player I know, Anthony Wilkins Sr., brought me home. I don't remember much from those early years, but a few things definitely stay with you forever. I remember sitting on the porch as Mom was coming in from a long day of working at McDonald's, dad bringing home some crabs to eat or taking me to watch him play ball with his friends, and even playing ninja turtles with my brother Kurtis. Those were some great times.

I also remember going over to my favorite aunt's house — let me tell you, Aunt Rose is the baker of the family, and she is why I truly love to cook.

I began getting in trouble around the age of 11 or 12. I did not listen to my mom, ran the streets, and ended up in the foster care system, which was not a good experience. However, after struggling in foster care for more than a year, I remember like it was yesterday when my dad showed up and took me home for good — it was one of the happiest days of my life.

Back home in West Baltimore, my dad worked late nights, and for a couple of years, it was just my sister Nicole and I most of the time. I started getting in trouble around the neighborhood and ended up in and out of juvenile detention centers until I was 17, when I began spending time in adult jails.

After some years passed, I moved here to the great state of West Virginia in 2001, where I had two children. I was still in and out of jail until I was sentenced in 2008 to five years in federal prison. That's when my life changed forever.



Chef Anthony Wilkins of Gourmet Fast, 709 Ruffner Ave. in Charleston. #Gourmetfast

Inside, I received my GED. I started working in the kitchen, even selling food to other inmates. During this time, I jumped on an available culinary correspondence program. I picked up those books and never put them down — reading day and night, over and over. I started to dream, and began to plan for my release date, and was so motivated to change my life that I told everyone what I was going to do.

The funny thing was, they didn't believe me.

In 2013, my sentence was up, and I went home. I knew I would have to be the hardest working, hardest studying, most motivated person I could be even to have a chance. I earned my food-handling certifications and went to Stratford University, where I learned a lot from my teachers and classmates, especially Master Chef Raimund Hofmeister.

I started working at the Cheesecake Factory while going to school and transferred from Baltimore to

Virginia Beach in 2014, continuing my culinary education there until 2016, when I moved back to West Virginia and gained custody of my children.

I was still motivated to finish school and grind toward my goal of opening a restaurant.

I started working at TideWater Grill in Charleston, where I met Felita Chase, who quickly became my best friend and is now the soon-to-be Mrs. Wilkins. We would stay up to the wee hours of the night talking about our goals and dreams—she truly is my number one supporter.

Felita and I didn't have a traditional route to becoming business owners, just a dream and hard work. We began offering meals from home until we gathered the funds to buy some stove burners, pots, and a tent. From there, we took our food outside for about two years — at Patrick Street Plaza and anywhere else that would have us—and sold fish sandwiches.

Four years ago, I received a call asking if I wanted an opportunity to have my own restaurant. Unfortunately, a person I was in business with stole everything from the bank account and left me with nothing. My fiancé tried to keep the doors open, but we couldn't hold on. So I got back to work at other restaurants.

In 2020, I was offered a job at Mediterranean Breeze in St. Albans. At the time, I was not familiar with Mediterranean foods, but I'll tell you, this food is fantastic. I was so excited to be learning something new, and the place was the busiest place I've worked since the Cheesecake Factory. The adrenaline rush I got was everything to me. I was back to flipping, moving fast, cooking 10-12 pans, and working multiple stations simultaneously. I was Head Chef. "Head—30-seconds-to-the-window—Chef."

I was back. I was happy. Then came the pandemic. We were laid off.

During this downtime, I completed the culinary arts program at Carver Career and Technical Education Center, where I had plenty of support from Chef Mandy Gum.

As dining restrictions began to lift, I asked Felita if she wanted to cook again. She said yes, and that's all I needed to hear. Charleston's West Side came out and showed so much love. Unfortunately, before the summer ended, a storm came rolling in and tore everything we had down, leaving us only \$1,500. So we took that money and found our current destination.

We've been grinding ever since and still are. The story is far from finished, and the best is yet to come. Stay tuned.



LADY D'S MAKING HISTORY ABOUT HISTORY

W.Va. through a Black lens

BY KABREA JAMES

Black prosperity and hidden history were the topics of discussion at the 'Those Who Came Before Us' video premiere at the Raleigh Playhouse and Theatre.

Attendees made their way into the auditorium to learn more about the rich "afro-lachian" history many locals know little to nothing about. Executive-produced by singer and visual artist Lady D, who is better known as West Virginia's First Lady Of Soul, the series gives an in-depth look at black achievement and artistry throughout time and throughout the state.

The event kicked off with a brief introduction from Lady D who said she wants to "show that we are here and that the things we have done and are still doing, matters."

Special guest and Beckley native Xavier Oglesby then shared memories of his Stratton High School days. Now known as 'Stratton Elementary', Stratton High School was the first all-Black high school in Raleigh County. The school opened in 1919 and graduated 2,786 students over the course of 48 years. Many graduates from Stratton High School went on to become prominent doctors, teachers, lawyers, nurses, engineers and business owners. These graduates also went on to create an abundance of

Black businesses that ran from the top of South Fayette Street all the way to Raleigh Hill, described by Oglesby as "a Black Wall Street".

Oglesby said East Beckley once had a strong sense of community that went beyond the walls of Stratton and that teachers were well-connected to both students and their parents. He also said students were proud to be from West Virginia and to attend a school that seemed to breed ambition.

"We took pride in being 'the best of the best,'" Oglesby said.

After a brief Q&A between Oglesby and attendees, Osage native and Appalachian soul singer Aristotle Jones hit the stage. The "Appalachian Soul Man" performed several songs including his hit song "The Talk", which is written around a dialogue between a Black parent and their Black child, warning them of the racism they might face growing up in a rural area.

A few remarks later, the projection screen dropped and attendees soon found themselves enjoying the first installment of "Those Who Came Before". The short documentary emphasized the uniqueness of Black creatives from the mountain state as well as their achievements, past and present.

The documentary featured poet, activist and Black by God publisher Crystal Good. Good gleamed while describing her admiration for Ada "Bricktop" Smith, a jazz legend from Alderson, W.Va. Good

said Bricktop is an example of the heights Appalachians can reach by being their authentic selves and through accepting the sense of mystery that seems to follow us.

"If I wasn't from West Virginia, I would wonder what it's like to be a black creative from West Virginia," Good said. "Like, what's it like there?"

The first installment of "Those Who Came Before" also featured jazz great Bob Thompson, who isn't from the state but attended West Virginia State University in the 1960s. Thompson reminisced on the multitude of jazz clubs that once populated downtown Charleston, including the infamous Shalamar Club started by jazz songstress Ann Baker and her husband Delaney "Wag" Wagner, a Charleston native. Thompson said the club drew in an array of legendary jazz acts in addition to Charleston's elite.

"There used to be a lot of traffic," Thompson said, "We got a chance to jam and listen and play. What I learned from the scene was not the theory of music but the way music should feel."

Lady D. explained that this showcase was only the beginning for "Those That Came Before." She hopes to raise the necessary funds to produce additional installments soon.

For more information on how you can support the unearthing of more rich, Black Appalachian History, visit Lady D's website: musicbyladyd.com

BLACK PRIDE from page 48

times when they may feel vulnerable. If you need a gentle listener or a reliable companion, the life liaison program is designed to give Black LGTBQ+ West Virginians peace of mind in knowing that there is someone they can call when they need support.

“With this program, we want to make sure that if you call WV Black pride... let us know... I need somebody to talk to that is like me, that can understand me, you can reach out to us, and we will be there for you. We’ll help,” Snyder said.

In addition to their other events and outreach programs, the WV Black Pride Foundation is looking to host the Black Pride Pageant. The pageant will crown a king, queen, and gender-inclusive titleholder. Initially scheduled for May 6, the pageant has since been postponed to a later date to garner more support and interest from the community. Details on the rescheduling of the pageant have not yet been made available.

When discussing the purpose and significance of the Black Pride Pageant, Flemming said, “To show that there’s different people with different colors and you know, our allies as well, just come together and have a good night, and just to show that we’re out here, and you don’t have to be afraid to run for a pageant.”

When it comes to the organization’s future, Snyder and Flemming have high hopes that the WV Black Pride Foundation will continue to make a positive impact in the Black and LGBTQ+ communities of Charleston for many years to come. According to Snyder, the goal is to one day open a community center for LGBTQ+ people of color.

“We’re looking for sponsors and donations so we can get our dream off the ground... We want to have a place and establishment to help people, a community center for the LGBTQ+ people of color; we can do this,” Snyder remarked.

For Flemming, the main goal is to make their presence known in the community and be a safe space for Black



2022 Rainbow Pride of W.Va., Charleston’s annual pride festival

LGBTQ+ folk.

“We want to stand out. We want to be a company, like I said, for the people of color to just be an outreach, you know, that is known in West Virginia. For us to unite, not only just our people but with the white LGBTQ+ within West Virginia,” Fleming explained.

The WV Black Pride Foundation encourages anyone interested to join their efforts in increasing the visibility of Black LGBTQ+ individuals in West Virginia. Whether you are a member of the LGBTQ+ community or an ally, Snyder and Fleming urge you to get involved.

“Welcome to the West Virginia Black Pride Foundation because we’re going to love you. We’re going to be a family. You’re going to be our sis. You’re going to be our bub. You’re going to be our niece, our nephew. Whatever you want to be, but, first and foremost, you’re going to be welcome,” Snyder said.

Black Experiences in White Appalachian Spaces

An award-winning film production company is adapting a major novel set in Appalachian Pennsylvania, and they want you to share your experiences navigating predominantly white Appalachian spaces.

An exciting opportunity to support a major motion picture!

Scan the QR Code or follow the link below to share



<https://tinyurl.com/bbgsupportsfilm>

Learn more about the filmmaker: <http://www.jimgoldblum.com>

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Spring 'Summer 2 Fashion Review

BY BREHANA SCOTT

I'd be lying if I said I started my life as a fashionista. In fact, I started my life as the only daughter of a single mother, a mother who frequently asked if I had Hollister money, and already knew the answer when she asked. No, I didn't have Hollister money. But I always had exactly what I needed and I always looked as cool as the other kids in polo shirts and jean skirts.

My journey to fashion started like many of my other pursuits in this life, a means to an end.

Fashion has shifted a lot throughout my life. From what was bought for me, to what I could scrounge up enough babysitting money to afford, to becoming an adult and establishing an authentic style, fashion has always felt rather transient to me.

When I accepted a position to market a new shop in my hometown of Lewisburg, W.Va. I had no clue what I was in for. In the few months that the Lewisburg Surf Shop has been open, I've really found myself leaning into fashion. The brands the store carries are new and exciting to me and I've loved getting to know them. Let's get into some of my favorite looks of the season so far.



Batsheva's Mini Prairie Dress'.

You can shop the dress at lewisburgsurfshop.com. Don't see your size? Shoot me an email so I can special order one for you: brehana@lewisburgsurfshop.com

A Night Out -

My night out was an evening wedding reception in late March. Inspo for the night was Batsheva Hay, a daring designer out of New York City. Batsheva's self-titled brand blurs the lines of traditional feminine fashion. She reclaims elements that were originally used to repress women, like voluminous sleeves and high necklines. The dress I chose for the evening was from Batsheva's Spring Summer '22 collection. The Mini Prairie Dress' sheer bodice exuded confidence while the polka dots throughout kept the dress (and the night) fun! I got SO many compliments on this dress. It was easy to sit in and to dance in and overall made for a great addition to my wardrobe.

A Work Lewk

When it comes to work, I figured out early that you truly have to wear the clothes to sell the clothes. Nothing sells a piece better than actually knowing what it feels like against the



Photo credit????

The Bandito Neon Color Sweater in Orange Glow is paired with a rainbow bright pleated skirt from Crosby by Mollie Burch.

skin or allowing customers to see how it sits on the divine feminine silhouette. "Having to wear" the clothes is honestly a blessing and has given me an endless excuse to treat myself! This next look was built around a lightweight neon sweater from Essentiel Antwerp. Essentiel is an European brand that's known for vibrant colors and prints. The Bandito Neon Color Sweater in Orange Glow is my

favorite wool-blend sweater from their Spring Summer '22 collection. Both breathable and light, the sweater has been perfect for those 60 degree mornings. I paired the sweater with a rainbow bright pleated skirt from Crosby by Mollie Burch. This combo racked up 95 likes on social and really made me feel like a ray of sunshine.

Floral Delights

This time of year there's nothing I love wearing more than a floral statement piece. These next two looks are all about the florals. For a casual work day I pulled out this amazing Rachel Comey oversized button-up Isa top. The Isa is available in store at Lewisburg Surf Shop in both red multi and blue multi. Rachel Comey is a brand that really embraces gender neutral pieces and every day elevated comfort-wear. For a Greenbrier Valley Pride fundraiser I popped on this vibrant full sleeve number by Stine Goya, another European based brand. For me, florals aren't going anywhere this season.



Shoe of the Season Birkenstocks

While there are so many great ways to let your toes see and be seen this summer, my go to everyday shoes have been my Birks. I bought two new styles and can't seem to get enough of either of them. Scoop the playful metallic Eva Sandal available in gold from birkenstock.com/gold and the classic Mayari Sandal that I got in black from Birkenstock as well.

To hear more about my latest looks in small town West Virginia, come shop with me at Lewisburg Surf Shop.



Florals aren't going anywhere this season.

For a casual work day, above, I pulled out this amazing Rachel Comey oversized button-up Isa top.

At Greenbrier Valley Pride fundraiser I wore this vibrant full sleeve number by Stine Goya, another European-based brand.

STAY IN STYLE!



The Fashion Buzz By Jayli!

Hi WV! I'm Jayli, a kid model and actress checking in from our capital city! I'm here to drop the jewels on the top fashion trends for Summer 2022 for girls and boys too!

It's finally summer vacation!

Time for flip flops and shorts, and the top accessories for the summer are BOLD and BRIGHT colors! For example, the top 5 color trends for the season are hot pink, orange, neon greens, purple, and sky blue.

For girls, puffed sleeves, butterfly tops, and baby tees paired with mini skirts and low-rise jeans for summer 2022.

Did you know that skinny jeans aren't as popular as they were about a decade ago? Crazy, right? But, don't worry leggings are still in style, and so are pleated skirts! And many people say that camo is one of the most fashionable prints out!

And last but not least, the hottest fashion trends for boys include tailored blazers, polo shirts, chino shorts, and everything striped and plaid.

Other cool styles for guys will be wearing a hoodie under blazers, bold cut-outs, airy silhouettes, and a relaxed style are just three of the buzzwords from this season's trends.

Well that's all I have for this season!

Follow me on Instagram
@JayliBayli for more fashion buzz!



Sarah Doneghy @sarahdnycity is a writer, actor, and activist. She is a native of Charleston, W.Va. and currently lives in New York City. Her one-woman show, *Mixed Nut* — a personal story about growing up mixed-race in West Virginia and was produced by the People's Improv Theater. The show packed the house every night! This article was reprinted with the authors permission from the Dec. 20, 2021, *The Lilly*

WHITE PEOPLE DON'T ALWAYS KNOW I'M BLACK. THAT'S WHEN THEIR RACISM IS REVEALED.

The jokes, comments, and stereotypes always flow so freely.

I speak up every time

BY SARAH DONEGHY

When I see mostly White people in a social gathering, whether it's a class, party or presentation, I do a scan. It's thorough but quick. Are there any Black people? Are there any people of color at all? When the answer is no, I prepare. How am I going to let them know that I'm Black? Am I going to wait until someone says something and then "surprise" them? Or will I be confrontational? Will I say, "Hey, guess what?" as if I'm kidding — but not really?

Most of the time, White people think I'm one of them. My skin is light, often as light as theirs. My lips are plump and my nose is broad, but my features aren't a tip-off. My hair is black, big and curly. If anything, that's the tell. But even then, it's usually: "I thought you were Italian, Greek or Middle Eastern." In other words, not quite White, but definitely not Black.

That's when the racism rears. Someone says something because they feel safe. They can speak freely. And they

have support.

A few years ago, I was at a friend of a friend's Super Bowl party in Queens. At some point, I made my way over to an assortment of snacks. I reached for the bowl of chips and listened to the chitchat of the three other snackers. A guy in a blue button-up with onion dip on his fingers mixed up the names of the football players on the screen. He laughed at his mistake. "Blacks all look alike," he said.

"It's true," I said, smirking. "I keep thinking I see my dad on the screen." There was a pause. As he nervously wiped the dip on his pants, I stood there watching him take in my skin, then moving up to my hair, my nose, my mouth. I saw the instant it dawned on him. I could almost hear the "click."

"I was only kidding!" he stuttered.

Uh huh.

"I didn't mean anything by it."

Sure.

"I have Black friends!"

Like that made it okay.

Another time, after an acting class a couple of years back, some of us went out for drinks. Four of us squeezed into a bar. The guy who had initiated the get-together decided an excellent icebreaker was a racist joke.

Before the punchline, I interrupted. "I'm Black." The joke teller gasped.

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Another woman held a candle up to my face. "No way!" The two of them laughed. The other guy with us smiled and said, "You could totally pass as White," as if it were a compliment. "Does this mean you've been with Black guys?!" the woman wanted to know. They all looked at me with googly eyes. I felt like an obscure art installation. I slapped money down on the bar for my drink, left and felt angry that I didn't say more.

The jokes, comments and stereotypes always flow so freely. Sadness, frustration, anger and humiliation overtake me. Whenever I let people know I'm Black, I've ruined the moment. I've made everyone uncomfortable. Eyes roll. Heads shake. They leave and talk about me. Laugh at me. Avoid me. Make me the enemy. How dare I accuse them of being racist? How dare I be Black?

What these people never do, what I've never heard, is an apology. Not once have they owned their racism. No one has ever said, "I'm sorry." I've also never had a White person step in. Where are the allies calling out racism? Would they only call it out if I were darker? If they knew they were being watched?

Even though I know how it will play out, I speak up every time. But it wasn't always this way. While I never did anything to purposely be perceived as White, for years of my adolescence, I chose to stay silent about being Black.

I grew up in West Virginia. There were very few Black families around, and we were the only mixed-race family in our area. At 12, I made the first and one of the only friends I had in middle school; she was White. One day, she invited me to hang out at her house after school. The only catch was I couldn't let her mom know I was Black, she said. If her mom found out, she wouldn't let us be friends.

The more White friends I made in the next few years, the more common this became. "We have to pretend you're White," they'd say. "Tell them you're Indian if they ask."

"Okay," I'd agree, wondering why that was somehow better than being Black.

"Don't let your dad pick you up!" they would tell me, panicking. I never said any-

thing to my parents. I didn't want to hurt their feelings. But there was always a sigh of relief when my White mom pulled up in the minivan. It meant I got to keep my friends.

In the seventh grade, I was riding home with my friend's family after I had joined them in church. We saw a Black man and a White woman holding hands on the street. "That's not right," her dad yelled to us. "It's disgusting." I still feel myself cramped in the back of that station wagon, trying to disappear and wanting to cry.

Sitting around the breakfast table after spending the night, I listened as another friend's family used the n-word. Didn't they understand that I had been called that? Didn't they know that it was a terrible word directed at me? But I was too nervous to say anything. I wanted to have friends. I wanted to be loved.

Then there were the times I didn't "get away with it." I was kicked out of more than a few houses, restricted from seeing friends and forbidden to date guys whose families didn't approve. When I was 15, I took a 16-hour bus ride to Virginia to meet my boyfriend's parents. His dad was chopping wood in the front lawn as my boyfriend proudly introduced us.

"Is she colored?" he asked. He didn't wait for an answer before snarling, "Get her the hell outta here." He didn't look at me. I felt frozen. Even now I hate what I said when I finally found words to say; it's what I had always been taught to say anytime I visited anywhere: "Thank you very much for having me." As I turned and walked away, I realized what I had just done. That's when I told myself that I would never again be in any situation without everyone knowing that I'm Black.

That's why today, even though I can't know if people assume I'm White, I can be assured that people won't assume that for long. Never again will someone say something about me without knowing it's about me. I'm proud to be Black. It's a big part of who and what I am.

I might be camouflaged, but I refuse to stay silent in the shadows. I may be hidden, but I will be seen.

*We are all real proud of Sarah back home.
H/t to Tiarra ~ BBG*

JUNE 2022 BY KABREA JAMES

Horoscopes for each zodiac sign

ARIES (March 21- April 19)

You step into the new month with a clear mind as well as the ability to communicate your needs more effectively. You may travel abroad, get lost in a good book or take sudden interest in a different culture. Looking ahead: You reap the benefits of prioritizing your emotions and enacting more self-care.

TAURUS (April 20- May 20)

Expect major clarity surrounding a financial matter as we enter the new month. You may also feel the urge to completely transform an area of your life as the result of a major secret coming to light. Looking ahead: Speak your truth without fear.

GEMINI (May 21 - June 21)

After some in-depth reflection, you're ready to unveil the latest version of yourself to the world. A key relationship will experience substantial growth and a new level of understanding. Looking ahead: Vibrating at a higher frequency aligns you with exciting money-making opportunities.

CANCER (June 22 - July 22)

You may have recently experienced an ending you simply had not anticipated. Shift your focus to self-improvement and open yourself up to the "new." Looking ahead: You're realizing that this is the fresh start you've needed all along.

LEO (July 23 - August 22)

You are spending a lot of time with the concept of what your ideal life looks like and how you can create it. Let your creative expression and enjoyment of life guide you. Looking ahead: Deep spiritual connection provides life-changing inspiration.

VIRGO (August 23 - September 22)

You could be finally feeling settled into a new role or higher level of exposure to the public. This change may also motivate you to make some changes to your home and put necessary boundaries in place. Looking ahead: You are one step closer to truly making your dreams come true.

LIBRA (September 23 - October 23)

You can't shake the desire to broaden your horizons in some way, whether it be intellectually or through literal travel. A reminder from your childhood may strengthen this urge. Looking ahead: Use a platform to share what you've learned with others.

SCORPIO (October 24- November 21)

You're on the other side of what turned out to be a massive transformation. A financial matter is finally settled and you can move forward accordingly. Looking ahead: A trip away would do you some good.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 - December 21)

Any tension plaguing a key relationship fades away now. You feel as though you're getting back to a part of yourself that you missed deeply. Looking ahead: Healing is not linear but it is worth it.

CAPRICORN (December 22 - January 19)

Hang ups regarding work are sorted and you are well on your way. Now is the time to reflect on your growth and give yourself some credit. Looking ahead: Make time and space for love.

AQUARIUS (January 20 - February 18)

A light-hearted friend or lover brings in much-needed fun and mental stimulation. Connections made during this time propel you to new heights. Looking ahead: Things only get better with time.

PISCES (February 19 - March 20)

This month is the beginning of a new emotional chapter for you. You could receive some form of recognition or find yourself elevating quickly. Looking ahead: Let go and have some fun.

FROM ANTIRACISMNEWSLETTER.COM

10 reads relating to racism

BY SHARON HURLEY HALL

Hello friends,

I often say that I'll never run out of things to write about relating to racism. It seems everywhere you turn there's another incident that (depending on your starting point) makes you feel terrible, drop your jaw in amazement, or tut in sad resignation. Some of the topics covered in this month's round-up fall into one or more of those categories. Ready to dive in?

1. Tara Jaye Frank: 5 Steps We Must Take To Truly Create An Inclusive, Representative, and Equitable Society by Tyler Gallagher

I follow Tara Jaye Frank on LinkedIn and Twitter, and I've always found that what she says has merit and value, so I was delighted to see this interview.

"If diversity is about being seen, and equity is about being valued, I see inclusion as feeling respected — for who you are, what you know, and what you can do. I want all people to feel respected, and that requires a whole lot of intentionality on the part of all leaders. Leaders need to be more intentional about how they engage people and how they show up for others."

medium.com/@tylergallagher36/tara-jaye-frank-5-steps-we-must-take-to-truly-create-an-inclusive-representative-and-equitable-d38a2bb042a

2. Afrophobia. Yes, It's a Thing by Clay Rivers

Who knew there was another name for anti-Black racism? Clay Rivers did, and in this article, he tells us all about Afrophobia, and suggests ways people can choose to fight it.

"Black folks are adept at reading body language. Over these last 400+ years, our survival in America has relied heavily upon our ability to read white people's intent. Not too long ago, the wrong move at the wrong time could get us killed."

www.ohfweekly.org/vol-4-no-14/

3. Racism is still an everyday experience for non-white Australians. Where is the plan to stop this? by Fethi Mansouri

Sometimes it's tempting to think of racism as a problem only where we are, but it's a global phenomenon. This article gives insight into how racism looks in Australia, and the huge amount that still needs to be done to dismantle it.

"Even more shocking is our collective failure to develop a credible strategy to address the root causes of racism — be it against Indigenous peoples, refugees, temporary migrant workers or other minority groups.

theconversation.com/racism-is-still-an-everyday-experience-for-non-white-australians-where-is-the-plan-to-stop-this-179769

4. Disrupting Narratives: Why Rosemary Campbell-Stephens MBE has no time for ignorance by Claire Walsh

Rosemary Campbell-Stephens is the creator of the term "people of the global majority" and always has views on racism worth hearing. This interview makes good reading.

"Globally, these groups currently represent c. 80% of the world's population making them the global majority now. With current growth rates, notwithstanding Covid-19 and its emerging variants, the global majority are set to remain so for the foreseeable future. Understanding this may 'shift the dial'. It certainly should permanently disrupt and relocate the conversation."

hr-rewired.com/disrupting-narratives-why-rosemary-campbell-stephens-mbe-has-no-time-for-ignorance/

5. Smith? Check. Now Clean Up the Rest of Your Hot Mess, AMPAS by Catherine Pugh Esq.

Catherine can be relied on for legally sound takes on how to fix racist systems, like her article on the police, featured in a previous round-up. Here she points out the hypocrisy inherent in the reaction to "the slap". The full article is worth a read and if you're so minded, check out her tweets.

"That is what I do for you here, in thirteen movements of 240 characters each. It would appear that as long as you do not slap the Academy with them,

you are free to tweet, chat, post, email, fax, snail mail, Instagram, upload, and all around harvest them at will. The goal? To form a simple, unified, and impossible to ignore decree:

The Academy is playing fast and loose with the rules. We see you. #MakeThisMakeSense because if you cannot, we will make sure the world sees you too." <https://title42usc1983.medium.com/i-challenge-you-to-challenge-the-academy-to-makethismakesense-312a5771a847>

6. Racism in Passive Voice by Decipher City

The question of agency is important in understanding how systems and people create false and racist narratives, as this author explains:

"Bringing the focus back to the racism actually requires that racism written about in an active voice because first and foremost, speaking in passive voice absolves abusers — in their mind. After all, anyone could be burning Black communities to the ground. Anyone could be failing Black students. Anyone could be rapidly displacing Black people from their homes. The ambiguity of the passive voice that allows the atrocities to continue, and for society to claim willful ignorance."

deciphercity.medium.com/racism-in-passive-voice-422c6a222bec

7. It's our responsibility as white LinkedIn users to normalise antiracism conversations by Philip Mix

What must an advocate for anti-racism and would-be ally do? Philip Mix lays it out clearly.

"My white colleague's choice not to contribute derives from systemic privileges of skin colour power, including in individuals' day-to-day decisions. Terence Channer's friend's choice not to contribute derives from systemic inequities and inequalities, and their consequential implications for individuals' day-to-day decisions. The differences for the choice-makers are undeniable."

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/its-our-responsibility-white-linkedin-users-normalise-philip-mix/>

8. When a Company's Big BUT Blocks DEI Efforts by Theresa M. Robinson

Blaxhaustion author Theresa M. Robinson now

Continued on page 57

10 READS from page 56

has a newsletter, The Real DEIL, and it contains real talk about racism. Here, she unpicks the trend of advocating kindness, and shows how that approach completely fails to make companies do the work.

“Advocating “kindness” rather than working towards equity and inclusion is a way to explain and justify why a company has NO DEI strategy.

Unfortunately, we’re not hearing any explanation for how these companies are executing on their “kindness strategy.””

www.linkedin.com/pulse/when-companys-big-blocks-dei-efforts-theresa-m-robinson-abd/

9. Anti-Racism: Does It Matter? by Shereen Daniels

Here Shereen Daniels, another of my favorite LinkedIn reads for straight talk and good sense, highlights the fact that some labels don’t help us fight racism; in fact, they may hinder efforts to recognize everyone’s humanity.

“Calling white people “allies” reinforces a sense of saviourism, implying that my anti-racist endeavours are to ‘help’ those unfortunate souls born with skins darker than mine. Trust me, white people don’t need any encouragement to do this.”

www.linkedin.com/pulse/anti-racism-does-matter-shereen-daniels-the-hr-conversationalist/

10. These Black Women Introverts Explain Why So Many Others Dread Returning To The Office by Dana Brownlee

I’m part of the duo featured in this article by Dana Brownlee about the intersection of being Black women introverts. Hint, it’s not always easy, as Lisa Hurley points:

“If one is quiet, perceived to be ‘anti-social,’ or not the first person to speak up in meetings, and—it must be said—Black, one is considered to be angry, unintelligent, unpromotable, not a team player and not a culture fit.”

www.forbes.com/sites/danabrownlee/2022/04/18/these-black-women-introverts-explain-why-so-many-others-dread-returning-to-the-office/?sh=2fd640cb7304

Happy reading! Feel free to share which article you liked best, and why.

Sharon

Leave a comment www.antiracismnewsletter.com/p/reading-list-april-2022?s © Sharon Hurley Hall, 2022.

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CHARACTERS

The One-Armed Bandit of No. 1 Holler

By Douglas John Imbrogno | WestVirginiaVille.com



“Characters” is a WestVirginiaVille series profiling West Virginia. This is a long-ish story about a one-armed guy from No. 1 Holler in rural Burnwell, West Virginia. He was a guy who was once recruited by the Harlem Globetrotters and turned them down. This is a guy who — in a legendary high school game — once flicked sweat from his stump into the eyes of future NBA great Elgin Baylor, stole the ball and swept past him to put the game away.

That’s how the story of that game goes, and Gary Mays — aka “The One-Arm Bandit” — is sticking to it, even if the official account of that long-ago night got the game-ending steal and layup all wrong, he says.

And don’t even talk about him being handicapped.

The story of Garret ‘Gary’ Mays’ can’t be told in tweets or a few paragraphs.

Read it at WestVirginiaVille.com

WestVirginiaVille.com is an independent, opinionated, monthly multimedia magazine on life, culture & news related to West Virginia. Keep up with our work by subscribing to our free, occasional newsletter: WestVirginiaVille.Substack.com

westvirginiaville.com/2020/06/characters-the-one-armed-bandit-of-no-1-holler-west-virginia/

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Read Around West Virginia

The Mountain State inspires readers and writers! Wherever you are, you can travel the hills through these books set in or connected to West Virginia.

When adults keep a place in the day to enjoy books with children in their lives, they show children that reading is important and enjoyable. They motivate children to read for fun, the mission of Read Aloud West Virginia. Children who decide on their own to read for pleasure improve their knowledge and skills year round, building on their school instruction.

This map was deliberately not drawn to scale.

Want to help keep books in the hands and on the minds of West Virginia children?

Donate at readaloudwv.org or send contributions to Read Aloud West Virginia P.O. Box 1784 Charleston, WV 25326

Created by Read Aloud West Virginia
Design and art by Brenda Pinnell/HepCatz Design

A few are out of print, but good to know about.
How many books, Read Aloud sponsors, and West
Virginia symbols can you find?

The coordinates on the right will help.

Jeanette Walls The Glass Castle, 2009	B-C8	Ski West Virginia <i>Eastern mountains</i>	E5
Cheryl Ware Venola the Vegetarian <i>2008</i>	F6	Steel mills <i>Wheeling</i>	D2
Catty Cornered, 1998	F5	Sugar maple <i>State tree</i>	D4
Booker T. Washington Up From Slavery, 1901	C7	Timber rattlesnake <i>State reptile</i>	H4
Jerry West and Jonathan Coleman West by West: My Charmed, Tormented Life, 2011	C6	West Virginia Capitol <i>Charleston</i>	C6
Billy Edd Wheeler Hotter Than a Pepper Sprout, 2018	B6	Wind farms <i>North eastern mountains</i>	F4
Colson Whitehead John Henry Days, 2001	C-D7	Thank you, sponsors for making this poster possible and for fostering the love of reading	
Christopher Wilkinson Big Band Jazz in Black West Virginia, 1934-1942, 2012	C8		
Meredith Sue Willis Saving Tyler Hake, 2020	B8	The Elliot Family Foundation	B2
Gen. Chuck Yeager and Leo Janos Yeager: An Autobiography 1985	B6	Moses Automotive Group	F8
Laurence Yep The Star Fisher, 1991	E4	United Bank	B6
West Virginia Icons and Imagery		Jefferds Corporation	A-B4
ATV Trails <i>Southern West Virginia</i>	B7	Steptoe & Johnson, PLLC	D5
Bituminous coal <i>State rock</i>	B8	Graystone Consulting	E4
Black Bear <i>State animal</i>	F5	NGK Spark Plugs	D4
Brook Trout <i>State fish</i>	E6	Orthopedic Trauma Group at CAMC	D4
Cardinal <i>State bird</i>	D3	John D. Pope, in memory of Candy Galyean	E6
Coal mining <i>All over</i>	B8	West Virginia University	F3
Flatwoods or Braxton County Monster <i>Braxton County</i>	E5	The Becker Family	C5
Golden Delicious Apple <i>State fruit</i>	D5	William Maxwell Davis	D7
Honeybee <i>State insect</i>	C4	Tom Heywood and Melody Simpson	E7
Monarch butterfly <i>State butterfly</i>	E5	ZMM Architects & Engineers	D6
Mothman <i>Point Pleasant</i>	B5	Mister Bee Potato Chips	C4
New River Gorge Bridge <i>Fayetteville</i>	D6	Huntington Regional Chamber of Commerce	B6
Northern red salamander <i>State amphibian</i>	E6	Mon Health <i>Bronze, Morgantown</i>	E3
Rhododendron <i>State flower</i>	C7	John T. Gibson, DDS, PLLC	I4
River commerce <i>Ohio River and state rivers</i>	C4	Marshall University	A6
Seneca Rocks <i>Pendleton County</i>	G5	Taylor Books	D6
		Advanced Physical Therapy	H3
		Bowles Rice LLP	G5
		Children's Dentistry Dr. Tracy Wilkerson	C6
		Robinson & McElwee PLLC	B7
		Harris Family Dentistry, Jonathan C. Harris, DDS	B5
		Bayer Heritage Federal Credit Union	D3
		WVU Employees Federal Credit Union	D4
		Berkeley County Development Authority	I4
		Constellium	C5
		Andy Richardson	C6
		Rotary Club of Grafton Friend, Grafton	E-F4

YOU CAN BE THE CHANGE WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER YOU CAN BE THE CHANGE WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER



YOU CAN CHANGE
THE FUTURE OF
YOUR COMMUNITY.

You can solve problems
you have witnessed in your
community for years. You can be
part of making solutions for your
community and others across the
state. We know it because we see it
every day.

Connect with the WV Community
Development Hub, and start
making the change you want to see
today.

wvhub.org

ALL
DETAILS
ONLINE

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER YOU CAN BE THE CHANGE WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER

HUB OPPORTUNITIES (DEADLINE)

JOB **Community Coaching Associate**
APPLICATIONS DUE JUNE 26

JOB **Community Development
Partnerships Coordinator**
APPLICATIONS DUE JUNE 26

**PAID
VOLUNTEER** **Rural Racial Equity
AmeriCorps VISTA**
APPLICATIONS DUE SUMMER '22

FELLOWSHIP **Champions for Change:
Community Leader Fellowship**
APPLICATIONS DUE JUNE 24

HUB OPPORTUNITIES (ALWAYS OPEN)

Jobs & Volunteering Board
WVHUB.ORG/JOB-BOARD

**Community Building &
Leadership Online Courses**
WVHUB.ORG/KICKSTART

WEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT HUB VOLUNTEER

Jakeya Perrin pushes for more leaders and POC to take leadership positions in their communities

BY JORGE RODRIGUEZ-STANLEY

WV COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT HUB

For Jakeya Perrin, becoming an AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) with the West Virginia Community Development Hub (The Hub) was an unexpected solution. Jakeya, like many recent college graduates, was looking for a job after graduation but was getting to the end of her rope as she searched. She knew that she didn't want to leave the state just yet; she was ready to give back to her community. That's when she started to consider committing to a year of service in Elkins as an AmeriCorps VISTA.

"I love West Virginia and I fell in love with Elkins," Jakeya says. "As an alumna of Davis & Elkins College, I look back and see that there are things about the campus I wish were different. How the town and the campus interacted is something I've always thought should be improved."

As a young Black woman, Jakeya knew that taking up a leadership role as a volunteer in West Virginia was going to be challenging. Yet, that didn't deter her. She took on the VISTA opportunity to not only make change in her community, but to open the door for young Black women and men behind her to find their way into similar roles.

"It's high time the positions of power in small and large communities reflected all people in those areas. Women, LGBTQ+, Black, and POC communities are not a minority, and are not to be sidelined or glossed over anymore," Jakeya says. "I believe that growth and progression go beyond safer parks and fixed up sidewalks - both of these are important and very much pivotal to community growth and development - but also progressing in people and growing in education, understanding, acceptance, and tolerance are important to every community's growth and development as well."

Often, she finds herself to be the only person of color in a room when helping out in the Elkins community and, while it can be disheartening, it keeps her motivated. She understands that change can start



Jakeya Perrin is an AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) with the West Virginia Community Development Hub (The Hub.)

with her opening the door for people of color and other groups that are historically underrepresented in the opportunities she is finding. She is ready to break down the barriers.

"Personally, it means a lot," she admits. "If I can just light a match and hand it off to someone like me and they make a torch and that torch becomes a whole bonfire, then I'll know that this was worth it."

She has seen the community grow during her time, but she has also gone through a lot of personal growth. Being a volunteer leader helped Jakeya learn more about the community around her and gave her the confidence to start pulling her own seat up to the table.

"While representation is important, it has to start somewhere. If you do not see a seat at the table for you, then pull one up," she says to encourage other leaders to step forward. "More will follow. To quote Langston Hughes' I, Too: 'Tomorrow, I'll be at the

table when company comes. Nobody'll dare say to me, 'Eat in the kitchen,' then. Besides, they'll see how beautiful I am and be ashamed — I, too, am America.'"

As her time as a VISTA in Elkins comes to an end, Jakeya is optimistic about Elkins' and West Virginia's future, but it will take work. Primarily, Jakeya thinks it is time, and that West Virginia is ready, to have tough conversations about marginalized communities and their past treatments. She appreciates being able to work with women in positions of power who have motivated her in her own journey to law school after her time as a VISTA.

"People of color and Black people also belong wherever they want to be with the same rights and respect as white people. The LGBTQ+ community belongs wherever they want to be with the same rights and respect as everyone else," Jakeya explains. "The lack of education on subjects about the treatment of minorities and the ignorance to the real problems in the world are apparent everywhere. It's time that we start breaking glass ceilings and pulling chairs up to the table. Being uncomfortable is not an excuse anymore."

She adds: "That is your community, too. Your voice should be heard and your presence known. Be the representation so that the next generation will have something to latch on to and help grow and continue."

By doing that, Jakeya hopes younger generations will choose to stay in West Virginia and continue to call it home. Her vision for West Virginia is that the state's population will begin to reflect the rest of the nation in terms of diversity.

"[I want to see] young people staying or returning after school, settling down and taking over or starting newer businesses," Jakeya shares. "I would like to see them investing in the area, planting their own roots or expanding on the ones they have already. The next generations are more than alright; they are proud, smart, kind, passionate, and ready to be the change this country, state, town and so forth needs. I'd love for those doors to be welcoming and open for them to step in and do just that."

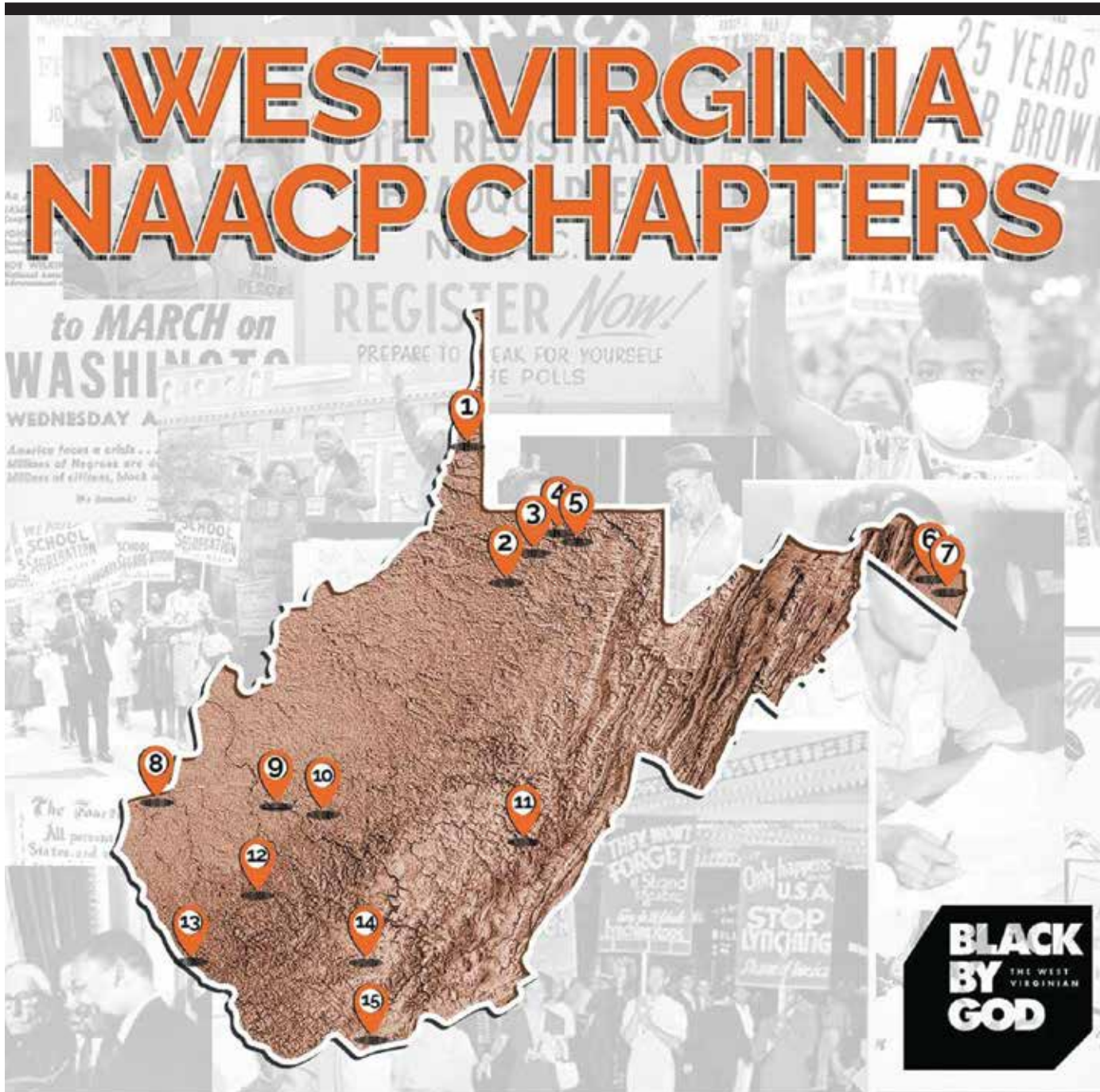


ILLUSTRATION BY KELSIE DOWLING

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|--|---|---|
| 1 Wheeling County Branch
NAACP #3239 | 6 Martinsburg, Berkeley County, WV
NAACP #3242 | 11 Greenbrier County
Branch of the NAACP |
| 2 Harrison County
NAACP #3228 | 7 Jefferson County
Branch of the NAACP | 12 Logan/Boone Branch
NAACP #3231 |
| 3 Marion County NAACP | 8 Huntington-Cabell NAACP and
Huntington Youth Council #3818 | 13 Mingo County (Williamson)
NAACP #3233 |
| 4 West Virginia University Collegiate
Branch of the NAACP | 9 West Virginia State University
NAACP | 14 Raleigh County
Branch of the NAACP |
| 5 Morgantown/Kingwood
Branch of the NAACP | 10 Charleston, WV NAACP | 15 Mercer County
Branch of the NAACP |

From the mistreatment of students of color to violent hate crimes, the WV NAACP has been a champion for the Black community of West Virginia by illuminating our shared injustices and taking action against inequality.

BY HAADIZA OGWUDE

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is a civil rights organization in the United States founded in 1909 to advance justice for African Americans. Some founding members of the group include W.E.B. Du Bois, Mary White Ovington, Moorfield Storey and Ida B. Wells. According to the NAACP website, the organization's mission is "to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination." The NAACP has a century-long history of grassroots activism and community organizing. With more than 2,200 units across the country, powered by over 2 million members, the NAACP has remained a leader in the fight against institutional racism.

"From bold investigations of mob brutality and protests of mass murders to testimony before congressional committees on the vicious tactics used to bar African Americans from the ballot box, it was the talent and tenacity of NAACP members that saved lives and laid the foundation upon which our fight for racial justice and equity is built."

This statement made on the NAACP website embodies the ethos of the organization and speaks to how the NAACP has actively fought on behalf of Black communities across the country for decades.

The NAACP of West Virginia, in particu-

Continued on page 63

NAACP from page 62

lar, has a long and rich history of community engagement and socio-political activism. From the mistreatment of students of color to violent hate crimes, the WV NAACP has been a champion for the Black community of West Virginia by illuminating our shared injustices and taking action against inequality.

For more information on how to join the national NAACP visit: naacp.org/join-naacp/become-member.

An NAACP membership allows you to: work with activists and organizers in local NAACP branches; organize marches, rallies, and direct action campaigns to bring attention to local issues; support access to quality education, healthcare, economic opportunities; advocate for laws and policies to improve your community; participate in voter registration and get out the vote campaigns; and attend national events, regional conferences, and trainings to sharpen your advocacy and leadership skills.

Information and a list of NAACP Chapters in W.Va.

■ Questions about membership, contact members@naacpnet.org, or call 866-636-2227.

■ For information on how to join the WV NAACP or one of its local branches, contact Vice President Katonya Hart, at katonyahart@gmail.com or call 304-382-6313. You may also reach out directly to a local chapter near you



■ BBG has developed an interactive list of active WV NAACP Chapters. We know this list may be

incomplete or need updates. Please contact us for edits and additions. blackbygod.org

Carrs awarded 2022 West Virginia Service Award for NAACP branch work

Dr. Jerry Carr, Jr., and Nicole Wilson-Carr, the husband-wife team instrumental to the success of the Morgantown/Kingwood Branch of the NAACP, are one of the six recipients of the 2022 West Virginia Governor's Service Awards, recognizing outstanding West Virginia volunteers. The Carrs are being honored for their work addressing the needs of the greater Morgantown area during the COVID pandemic and a time of explosive growth for the branch.

Dr. Carr was branch president when membership grew to about 150 after George Floyd's murder in May 2020, so he had the challenge of creating an agile and responsive organization while meeting virtually because of COVID. Morgantown's City Council then established a committee that summer to consider creating a Civilian Police Review and Advisory Board. Dr. Carr participated in the meetings, advocated for the board at council meetings and through the media, and worked with community groups to identify potential board members to represent the diverse con-

stituencies interacting with the Morgantown police.

Ms. Wilson-Carr led efforts to address COVID-19 because African Americans did not have adequate access to testing and vaccines. She participated in the state-wide African American Covid task force, organized vaccine clinics at a low-income housing complex and restaurant with Hispanic employees and Red Cross blood drives, and promoted organ and bone marrow donations. One clinic reached over 170 individuals to address Governor Justice's initiative correcting imbalanced vaccination rates, as only 5 percent of African Americans were vaccinated.

As a result of their work, the branch has new ties to Morgantown's city government and police department, a healthier community better protected against COVID-19, and more awareness of the importance of donating organs and bone marrow and giving blood.

The Carrs and other recipients will be honored at a ceremony at the Cultural Center in Charleston on June 16th.



NJAAAHA announces summer youth program at WVSU

The Norman Jordan African American Arts & Heritage Academy is excited to announce our 2022 Summer Youth Arts & Heritage Academy. in person at West Virginia State University the week of July 11-16, 2022.

The following artistic disciplines are being offered:

Instrumental Music (keyboards, strings, horns, & percussion instruments), Vocal Music, Theater, Dance, Visual Arts, and Creative Writing, which include songwriting and hip-hop expressions.

For more information, and to register for this year's academy, contact Dr. Jordan (216) 290 -8564 or email using the subject "Academy Registration" to: brucella45@live.com

Registration application: normanjordanaaaaha.com

ACCIDENTAL
TOMATOES
finding faith beyond the fences



NAACP

Charleston, WV Branch

secretary@charlestonwvnaacp.org 

facebook.com/charlestonwvnaacp 



VACCINE EDUCATION, TESTING & CLINICS

Learn how you can help stop the spread of COVID-19.

The Charleston Branch of the NAACP has partnered with PAAC (Partnership of African American Churches) to offer family activities around Kanawha County while, at the same time, offering vaccine education, testing & clinics.

Help put a stop to another surge! Contact us to learn more.



GET INVOLVED

Branch Meetings

Monthly: Last Tuesday @ 6:30 PM

Location: Via Zoom

Join A Committee

- Armed Service & Veteran Affairs
- Communications & Public Relations
- Economic Development
- Education
- Environmental & Climate Justice
- Finance
- Health
- Housing
- Legal Redress
- Membership
- Political Action
- Religious Affairs