

MINI BBG

**BLACK
BY
GOD**
THE WEST
VIRGINIAN

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Black Business Directory: Black on The Map

This issue features:

- Black Music Month
- Fashion Report
- Agriculture
- Tech

"The Block," represents the rich history of Black business districts in Charleston West Virginia prior to integration.



Juneteenth, 2025

Publishers Note



I once heard about a coal company paying its workers \$2 bills just to prove how much money it was pumping into the local economy. Those bills were everywhere — at corner stores, churches, and barbershops — a visible trail of value.

What would it look like if we did that today with Black dollars? If we made the circulation visible?

This Juneteenth, Father's Day, West Virginia Day, Pride issue — there is a lot to celebrate, and we're proud to launch our first Black Business Directory to show what investing in each other looks like.

This issue is about visibility, value, and keeping our dollars — and our stories — close to home.

— Crystal Good
Publisher, *Black By God: The West Virginian*

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June 19, 2025

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Black Business Directory

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BLACK BUSINESS IS LIBERATION

BBG's Black Business Directory "Black on the Map" Project

This is a living document. It's not perfect, and it's not complete — but it's a start.

Black By God is building West Virginia's most comprehensive directory of Black-owned businesses. We believe knowing who's doing the work — and where — is power. Now more than ever, circulating our dollars within our own communities is not just an economic strategy, it's an act of self-determination.

We need your help to grow this map. If you know a Black-owned business that should be listed, let us know. This is our directory. Let's build it together.

Submit additions and updates at blackbygod.org/blackbusiness

Buy Black. Share Local. Keep us on the map. ☒ Businesses vetted by BBG

Media/Marketing

- ☒ **Black by God**, WV.
- ☒ **Traci Phillips**, Charleston, WV. Call 304-561-7571 or email Traci.Phillips@aol.com
- Gladdis Consulting Group, LLC**, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-470-0358
- ☒ **Mind to Matter Design**, Owned by Telitha Snell. 5312 MacCorkle Ave, SW #134, South Charleston, WV. Call 304-444-0144 or visit mindtomatterdesign.com
- ☒ **National Center for Intersectional Studies / Awesome Enterprises LLC**, Owned by Jacqueline Shaulis. 126 E Burke St, Martinsburg, WV. Call 575-SHAULIS or visit jacquelineshaulis.com
- RBG Prints**, Charleston, WV.

Tech

- ☒ **Mountaineer Technology Consultants LLC**, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-296-1937
- GO Journey Journal Inc**, Charleston, WV. Call 304-380-4892
- My Radio Network**, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-554-9067
- TL Tek LLC**, Charleston, WV. Call 304-545-9243
- iTrend Technology**, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-777-2008

Cleaning

- Crystal Clear Facility Services**, Owned by Rober S. Dixon. PO Box 472, Granville, WV 26534. Call 304-376-1968
- Main Sanitation**, Owned by Kenny Jackson. Email mainsanitation@live.com
- ☒ **Tidy Time Cleaning Services**, Owned by John Schley. 206 Reno Street, Clarksburg, WV. Call 304-626-5637 or visit facebook.com/people/Tidy-Time-Cleaning-Services/61557974602327/?_rdr
- Clear as Glass**, Morgantown, WV.
- Mountaineer Cleaning Service**, Charleston, WV. Call 304-680-2852
- Hydro Pressure Wash**, Bluefield, WV.

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Services

- Mr Bundles TV**, Charleston, WV.
- Reginald Foman**, Clarsville, PA.
- DJ Sean Nice/Sean Harris**, Uniontown, PA. Call 724-570-5622
- ☒ **Creatively Carson's Creations**, Beckley, WV. Call 304-860-0869 or visit facebook.com/100039814275337/about
- Gaddis Event Planning LLC**, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-322-0149
- Lists**, Dunbar, WV.

- ☒ **Keep Your Faith Corp**, 1313 Quarrier St # B, Charleston, WV. Call 304-981-1412 or visit www.kyfc.org
- NESCorp-National Education Support Corporation**, Call 304-264-6133 ext. 21
- Ammco**, South Charleston, Call 800-462-2626
- Be Merry Event Planning & Design**, Charleston, WV. Call 304-840-6356
- Wanderlust Travels**, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-276-3690
- Antinette's Customs**, Bluefield, WV.
- LifeSeeds LLC-Training & Coaching**, Huntington, WV. Visit mylifeseeds.com
- Life Seeds Development Group**, Call 844-226-7438 or visit lifeseedsdevelopmentgroup.com
- ☒ **Do Something Different**, Owned by Eric Easley. 742 5th Street West Huntington, WV. Call 304-908-9078 or facebook.com/DoSomethingDifferentInc
- ☒ **Lightbulb Moments LLC**, Sarah Brown, 4067 Hampton Ridge Rd., Genoa, WV. Visit mylbnm.net
- ☒ **People of Worth Inc.**, Owned by Zondria Lansdowne. 500 W. King St., Martinsburg, WV. Call 304-240-2398
- ☒ **SLM Bookings**, Owned by Latisha McDougal. Martinsburg, WV. Call 304-278-4747 or visit slmbookings.com/home
- Wilcox Bookkeeping & Tax Services**, Huntington, WV. Call 304-633-6435
- ☒ **Capital Insurance Group**, 216 W. Washington St, Charleston, WV. Call 304-606-2969 or visit cigwv.com
- Slocum Life Banking**, Beckley/Martinsburg, WV.
- Tax Return Specialists**, Beckley WV.
- Action Facilities Management Inc**, Owned by Diane Lewis Jackson. 115 Malone Drive Morgantown, WV. Call 304-598-6850 or visit actionfacilities.com
- Luxury Credit Repair**, Charleston, WV. Visit thecreditbae.com
- ☒ **Ohana Self Defence Institute**, 1517 Fairmont Ave, Fairmont, WV. Call 304-844-2240 or visit ohanaselfdefensewv.com
- Travel with Nika**, 401 E Park Ave. Fairmont, WV. Call 304-363-9044 or visit facebook.com/profile.php?id=153424841337786



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Food

- ✓ **Sumthin Good Soul Food**, Owned by Jay and Fran Harris, 4837 MacCorkle Ave South Charleston, WV. Call 304-768-0968 or visit sumthinggoodsoulfood.com
- ✓ **Dem 2 Brothers and a Grill**, 189 Summers St Charleston, WV. Call 681-205-8621
- ✓ **Big Marv's Kitchen and Grill**, Charleston, WV. Call 681-319-6825
- ✓ **Get Fit Juices & Shakes**, 200 Fort Pierpont dr, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-381-4945 or visit facebook.com/Getfitjuices.shakes/
- ✓ **Heard's Best BBQ Ever**, Morgantown/Fairmont WV. Call 304-692-9665 or visit facebook.com/Heards-Best-BBQ-Ever-212513709558715/
- ✓ **LC Bakes**, 444 B Chestnut st, Morgantown, WV. Call 540-316-7096 or visit lovelc.squarespace.com
- ✓ **Regions Services LLC-African Carribbean Foods**, 918 Chestnut Ridge Rd, Morgantown WV. Call 304-241-1804 or visit facebook.com/people/African-Caribbean-Food-Market-and-Restaurant-WV/100057367693056/
- ✓ **Karubees Jamaican Restaurant**, Owned by Kerry Martin. Call 304-400-6166 or visit karubees.com
- ✓ **EbO's LLC**, 304 Adams Street Fairmont, WV. Call 304-657-4754 or visit facebook.com/EbOS-LLC-11547353332170/
- 4th & Goal**, 234 Walnut St, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-225-2663
- ✓ **Scorers**, 201 Holland Avenue , Morgantown, WV. Call 304-292-4855 or visit facebook.com/ScorersWV

- ✓ **Zeganz Smoothie Shop**, 1588 Washington St E, Charleston, WV. Call 304-343-7111 or visit facebook.com/ZeganzSmoothieShop/
- ✓ **Tito's Sloppy Dogs**, 1068 Market St, Wheeling, WV. Call 304-650-6252 or visit facebook.com/titossloppydogs/
- ✓ **Poppa Jay Yaadman Kitchen**, Beckley WV. Call 304-575-5774 or visit poppajayyaadman.com/
- The Game Room**, 2327 S Oakwood Ave, Beckley, WV. Call 681-207-5058
- Marsh BBQ**, 1201 Johnstonw Rd, Beckley, WV. Call 681-207-2930
- Rachel's on 16th**, 86 16th St, Wheeling, WV. Call 304-830-8331
- Ashlee's Dipped Delights**, Northfolk, WV. Call 304-862-2053
- ✓ **Spencer's Catering & Carry Out**, Owned by Francine Spencer. Northfork Hollow, Northfork, WV. Call 304-862-2045
- ✓ **Phat Daddy's on the Tracks**, Owned by Octavia Cordon. 1634 6th Ave Charleston, WV. Call 304-982-5020 or visit phatdaddyswv.com
- Bruh's Backyard BBQ LLC**, Fairmont, WV. Visit facebook.com/people/Bruhs-BBQ-LLC/100068306137170/
- Caribbean Dreamz Cuisine**, Bridgeport, WV.
- Jamaican Spice**, 708 Beechurst Ave, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-241-4554 or visit facebook.com/JamaicanSpiceWV/
- Russ' Ribs**, Kingwood WV. Call 304-329-8046
- The Oven Take Out Restaurant**, Uniontown, WV. Call 724-550-4181
- Not Your Average Cupcake**, Rand, WV. Visit facebook.com/NYACupcakeAndSweets/

✓ **Businesses vetted by BBG**

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- Unconditional-Private Chef**, Dunbar, WV. Visit facebook.com/unconditionalwv/
- Mountain Baby Organics**, Dunbar, WV. Visit facebook.com/mountainbabyorganics/
- Gabr's Grill and Cafe**, 109 S Walker St, Princeton, WV. Call 681-282-5361 or visit facebook.com/Gabrs-Grill-and-Cafe-345948789343073/
- Flava Dave's**, Martinsburg, WV. Call 540-771-9242 or visit facebook.com/flava.daves.7
- TC Cupcakes and Sweets**, Bluefield, WV. Call 304-960-2047 or visit facebook.com/pages/TC-Cupcakes-and-Sweets/110836743935835
- ✓ **Miss Ruby's Corner Market**, Owned by Keep Your Faith Corp. Dural Miller. 739 Central Ave. Charleston, WV.
- ✓ **Miss Bea's Kitchen & Catering**, Owned by Belinda Nicholas. Call 681-404-9082 or visit missbeaskitchencatering.business.site/
- ✓ **Upland Soul Food**, Owned by Tamara Grandjean. 206 Main Street, Beckley, WV. Call 304-777-7513
- ✓ **Little Blue Garden**, Owned by Nate Smith. Box 655, Northfork, WV. Call 304-409-8512 or 304-862-3415
- ✓ **Bennady's Bar & Grill**, Owned by David Cannady. 33550 Coal Heritage Rd Northfork, WV. Call 681-368-3000 or visit www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063459013010&mbextid=ZbWKwL
- ✓ **Rosco's Soul Food**, Owned by Tamra Padgett. 872 Virginia ave, Welch, WV. Call 681-201-2050 or visit facebook.com/people/Roscos-Soul-Food-kitchen-and-catering/61553305348377/
- ✓ **Sonja's Sweets**, Owned by Sonja Rogers. South Charleston, WV.
- ✓ **The Southern Kitchen**, 2285 Beverly Pike Suite 3, Elkins, WV. Call 304-801-3362



Image from sumthinggoodsoulfood.com

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Real Estate

Glymph Real Estate, Morgantown, WV.

Call 304-685-3467

✓ **William Spencer**, Charleston, WV. Call 304-400-3338 or visit willestateagent.com



✓ **The Real Estate Firm LLC** (general contractors), Charleston, WV. Call 304-400-3338 or visit refirmcontracting.com

✓ **Duke Jordan**, 1337 Virginia St E., Charleston, WV. Call 304-415-0607

Travel with Nika, Wheeling, WV.

Jek Travels LLC, Martinsburg, WV. Call 866-313-4170

✓ **Blue Appalachia: Cottages on the Hill**, Owned by Olarotimi Ponder. 1400 Hill Ave Bluefield, WV. Call 304-308-0465 or visit blueappalachia.wv.org



Arts & Entertainment

✓ **Fun Fitness Kids Club LLC**, Owned by Justin & Traci Phillips. Charleston, WV. Call 681-234-5437 or visit funfitnesswv.com

J Flow Entertainment, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-241-1060

The Drop Recording Studio, Morgantown, WV.

Triple Entertainment, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-241-1060

Upscale Arts, Charleston, WV. Call 304-205-4042

Different Strokes by Shanti K, Charleston, WV.

Lavish, South Charleston, WV. Call 304-206-5766

✓ **Cam's World Selfie Studio**, Owned by Yvonne Lee. 1638 6th Ave. Charleston, WV. Call 304-550-7336 or visit camsworld912.com

Boujee Boards by Roz, Huntington, WV.

Say Uncle Entertainment, Owned by Woody Woods. Charleston, WV.

DJ Rico, Charleston, WV.

Call 304-552-8636

✓ **A Shot of Lee Photography**, Owned by Leeshia Lee. Charleston, WV.

Hyclass Entertainment/ Video DJ Press, Charleston, WV.

✓ **Black Magic Circus**, Owned by Mariah Hines. WV, MD, OH, PA. Visit facebook.com/blackmagiccircus

✓ **Indie Soul Photography**, Owned by Je'Dah Madison. Mercer County, WV. Visit indiesoulphotography.com

Keisha Rhodes-DJ Low Kee, Connellsville, PA.

The Unit Band-Live Music, Charleston, WV.

✓ **Businesses vetted by BBG**

Celebrating **Pride**

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Home & Auto

✓ **GCC Construction Co**, Owned by James Green. PO Box 182 Bluefield, WV 24701.

Call 304-960-9952 or visit gcc-construction.com

Mulch & More, Winfield, WV. Call 304-586-2659

Modern Homestead at Tathams, Reedsville. Call 304-864-4333

✓ **Basic Supply Company**, 628 8th Ave, Huntington WV. Call 304-523-1587

Bash Bros Detailing, Wheeling, WV.

Attention to Detail, Wheeling, WV. Call 304-905-1925

Faith Over Fear-roofing, Bluefield, WV.

Saunders Lawn Care LLC, Bluefield, WV. Call 704-245-3274

West Auto Repaires, Smithfield, PA. Call 724-564-1770

✓ **Cumberland's Finest**, 323 W Cumberland rd, Bluefield, WV. Call 304-325-5823

Winston Wheels and Tires, Fairmont, WV. Call 304-816-3244

BGC Auto Detailing, Morgantown, WV.

Dave Bice Auto Detailing, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-282-2755

S&J Roadside Service, Bluefield, WV.

Veteran Bikers MC HQ LLC, Grafton. Call 304-612-8101 or visit veteranbikersmc.com

✓ **Luv Enterprises (rental car services)**, Owned by Shamekia Robinson. 231 Capitol Street Ste. 9 Charleston, WV. Call 304-853-3005 or visit lucars.us

Penn and Company, Westover, WV. Call 304-319-5238

✓ **Cary Law Firm**, Owned by Michael Cary. 112 Capitol Street Suite 200 Charleston, WV. Call 304-804-6369 or visit carylalawofficewv.com

Mavery L. Davis CPA, Charleston, WV.

✓ **KJP Electric**, Parkersburg, WV. Call 304-615-6124

Empire Electric and Construction, Dunbar, WV.

✓ **Elopers**, Charleston, WV. Call 304-370-3028 or visit elopersdmv.com

Aayl Landscape and Lawncare,

Ponder Design Co., Owned by Olarotimi Ponder. 640 Albemarle St. Bluefield, WV. Visit ponderdesignco.com

✓ **Unlimited Future Inc. (nonprofit)**, 1650 8th Ave, Huntington, WV. Call 304-697-3007 or visit unlimitedfuture.org

Hometown Mobile Detailing & Pressure Washing, Princeton, WV.

✓ **Elk City Auto Spa**, Owned by Charles Parker. 116 Laidley Street Charleston, WV. Call 304-345-2007 or visit elkcityautospa.com

Moving Companies

Safe Movers, 1589 Dixie St, Charleston, WV.

Call 304-881-9275

Movers & The Shakers, Call 304-617-8323

Walk by Faith Moving Service, Charleston, WV.

Call 304-419-6298

Movers 4 You, Wheeling, WV. Call 304-218-0474



Celebrating **Pride**

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Retail

Westwood Charm Boutique, Martinsburg, WV. Call 304-283-7000
☒ **Silhouette Boutique**, Charleston, WV. Call 304-993-6796 or visit silhouette-boutique.com
N Style Fashion Boutique, Charleston, WV. Call 304-508-8988
Kiss From Heaven, Bluefield, WV. Visit facebook.com/Kiss-From-Heaven-102469181495340/
Edith's Store, Lewisburg, WV. Call 304-645-7998
A Pied Shoes, Fairmont, WV. Call 304-534-8119
Dayo Women, Atlanta, GA. Call 413-544-6021
Backstage Bodywear, Charleston, WV. Call 304-343-2100
GBajumo Fashion, visit gbajumofashion.com
Luvs Handcrafted Furniture, Osage, WV. Call 304-435-9103 or visit facebook.com/pages/Luvs-Handcrafted-Furniture/558694057985374
Presenting the Soap Opera, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-292-1211
Anderson Shoe Repair, Osage, WV.
☒ **Ncline Purses**, Teays Valley, WV. Call 304-982-1556 or visit facebook.com/nclinepurses/
The Apostles Closet, Charleston, WV.
Giggles n' Grins Diapers-Cakes & Gifts, Beckley, WV. Call 304-663-7830
Top Notch Tutu, Beckley, WV.
NURC (Not Ur Roomates Closet), Charleston, WV.
A&J Sporstown, Bluefield, WV. Call 304-800-4256
Flourish Fashion Boutique, Owned by Leisha Welch.
Classic Kickz, Morgantown, WV. Call 681-209-8678
Stebbie's Boutique, Bluefield, WV.

Nell's Bling Team \$5 Glam, Charleston, WV. Call 304-542-5484 or visit paparazziaccessories.com
Ayanna's Little Bow Tique, Visit facebook.com/AyannasLittleBowTique/
NBGrind (Basketball Skill Enchantment), Call 304-306-0106 or visit nbgrind.com
Superior Speed, LLC, Huntington, WV.
☒ **Wrighteous Wear**, Owned by Damon Wright. 71 Towerview Dr. Martinsburg, WV. righteouswear.com
The Boutique by BBelle Events, Owned by Dwedee Kobbah. 209 Washington St W, Charleston, WV. Call 304-989-0906 or visit bbelleevents.com
☒ **Haven Scented Creations**, Owned by Tikeya Johnson. 1909 Ohio St, Bluefield, WV. Visit facebook.com/Havenscentedcreations
☒ **Balance Clothing Company**, Owned by Jeffrey Collins. 728 Crescent Rd. Charleston, WV. Call 304-343-2220 or visit balancecc.com



Image from righteouswear.com

☒ **Businesses vetted by BBG**

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☒ **Tasha's Uniforms**, Owned by Natasha Ellis. 965 Dunbar Village Plaza, WV. Call 681-313-8024
☒ **Weirkickz**, Owned by Myles Rice, 201 Columbus Way, Weirton, WV. Call 304-919-3271 or visit facebook.com/share/VPPSUR9kZsrUtExE/?mibextid=LQQJ4d
☒ **Autumn Sky LLC**, Owned by Jacinta Johnson. 311 Washington St W, Charleston, WV. Call 681-265-2447 or visit facebook.com/autumn.sky.708764
☒ **Gracefully Repurposed**, Owned by Tonieh Arroyo. 1401 Charles Ave Dunbar, WV. Call 681-205-8373
Heavenly Essence Candles, St. Albans, WV.
Cynthia's Devine Designs, Fairmont WV.

Beauty

Classic Cutz, Morgantown, WV.
Upscale Barbers, Charleston, WV.
Boho Spa Unconditional Healing Center, Charleston, WV.
☒ **Fab House Salon**, Owned by Kerry Wilkinson. 1228 Ohio Ave Dunbar, WV. Call 304-768-3655 or visit fabhousesalon.com
Noni Beauty Supply Store, 917 20th St, Huntington, WV.
Stradwicks Fade Cave, Wheeling, WV.
Eye Candy Beauty Supply, Fairmont, WV.
Areigna Therapies, Bluefield, WV.
☒ **Hair on LOCKE**, Owned by Tori Locke. St. Albans, WV. Call 304-541-2787 or visit haironlocke.business.site/
☒ **The Essence of Beauty**, Owned by Tonya Wilson. 502 Washington Street West Charleston, WV. Call 681-265-2231 or visit theessenceofbeauty.net
The Palm Salon & Spa, Cross Lanes, WV.
Amina's All Natural Hair & Beauty Salon, 440 Spruce St, Morgantown, WV.
6th Street Salon, Clarksburg, WV.
A Cut Above, 307 N Main St Moorefield, WV. Call 304-538-6950 or visit facebook.com/profile.php?id=138610506186497
DC's Barber Shop, 228 E Pike St. Clarksburg, WV. Call 304-623-7028 or visit facebook.com/profile.php?id=152264101456518&_rdr
CC Bella Hair Co., Huntington, WV. Visit facebook.com/ccbella304
Cosmetics by Tae Andretti, Princeton, WV. Visit facebook.com/eyemeticsbytae/
☒ **Kash Kuttz**, 110 W Washington St, Charleston, WV. Call 304-533-6499 or visit facebook.com/kash.kuttz/
☒ **Tracy's Wax Bar & Facial Lounge**, 709 Beechurst Ave # 14A, Morgantown, WV. Call 304-943-7947 or visit waxbarbytracy.com



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- ✓ **Nappy by Nature Legacy Salon**, Owned by Tina Beatty. 1446 3rd Ave Charleston, WV. Call 304-343-9191
- ✓ **Hey Girl Hair and Beauty**, 114 Washington St W Suite 202, Charleston, WV. Call 304-807-9623 or visit facebook.com/heygirlhbvw
- ✓ **Royal Fades Barber Shop LLC**, 316 Thorn St, Princeton, WV. Call 304-887-5226 or visit royalfadesbarbershops.com
- Studio K Beauty Lounge**, 1326 B Stafford Dr, Princeton, WV. Call 304-673-9667 or visit facebook.com/studiokbeautylounge1
- ✓ **The Hair Queen**, 1335 Bland St, Bluefield, WV. Call 304-952-8875 or visit thehairqueenwv.com

Ladies & Gents, Morgantown, WV.

Frenchy's Barbershop & Salon, Bluefield, WV.

✓ **Braids & Twists**, Owned by Rebecca Cobourne. 182 Summers Street Charleston, WV. Call 304-805-3393 or visit braidstwists.com

✓ **She vs Her Beauty Supply Boutique**, Owned by Tamara Rush. 306 Patrick St. Plaza, Charleston, WV. Call 304-941-2493

Boulevard Beauty Salon, Uniontown, PA.

KL Stylez Braiding and Natural Hair Care, Morgantown, WV.

Natural Royalti Beauty Palace LLC, Morgantown, WV.

Poetic Justice Hair Salon, Fairmont, WV.

Simple Cutz, Fairmont, WV.

Suzzie Joe's Beauty Salon, Uniontown, PA.

Miracle Nails by Anita, Fairmont, WV.

Ms Jeans Barbershop, Charleston, WV.

Wesley's Beaute Studio, Charleston, WV.

Flys Cutz, Bluefield, WV.

✓ **Mountain Mama Made**, Owned by Kisha Eskins. Charleston, WV. Visit etsy.com/shop/mountainmamamade1/

✓ **Tee La La Beauty and More llc**, Owned by Christie O'Neal. 1228 country club rd suite 1. Call 419-975-7492 or visit tee-la-la-beauty-more.square.site

✓ **North Mountain Apothecary**, Owned by Keisha Burns. 100 E. Main St., Hedgesville, WV. Visit northmountainapothecary.com

✓ **Tony's Barbershop**, Owned by Dacia Howard. 951 Mercer St. Princeton, WV. Call 304-960-5000



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Health

✓ **Right at Home**, Owned by Eric Hicks. 1599 2nd Avenue, Charleston, WV. Call 866-453-2128 or visit rightathome.net/charleston-west-virginia

Southview Pharmacy, Inside Grant's Supermarket, 140 Majestic Pl, Bluewell, WV. Call 304-589-5025

Freedom To Be (birth/parenting/doula), Charleston/Huntington, WV.

Boll Medical Inc, Charleston, WV.

Lester Square Pharmacy, Sophia, WV. Call 304-683-2111 or visit lestersquarepharmacy.com

Solace Behavioral Health, 1228 Country Club Rd, Suite 800 Fairmont, WV. Call 304-534-8582

Harmony Mental Health, Parkersburg, WV. Call 304-917-4741

BLT Behavioral Support, Uniontown, PA. Call 724-366-1777

Dugan Funeral Home, INC, Beckley, WV. Call 304-253-8881

The Lantz Funeral Home, INC, Uniontown, PA. Call 724-438-4030

Dumas Psychology Collective, Beckley, WV. Call 304-844-2240 or visit dumaspsychologycollective.com

QLabs Inc., Charleston, WV. Visit qlabs-inc.com

Brick Built Strength, Visit brickbuiltstrength.com

Be Fit, Charleston, WV. Call 304-421-2186

TrainRek Training, Hurricane, WV. Call 304-437-9288

Apex Training, St. Albans, WV. Call 304-545-7282

Gorilla Strength and Fitness, Nutter Fort, WV. Call 304-685-2108



Black Business Spotlight

BY TRACI PHILLIPS

Rolling Liberation: How One Black-Owned Business Is Moving Our Youth Forward

Fun Fitness Kids Club is more than just a business — it's a movement on wheels. This Black-owned, family-led business is redefining wellness for children across southern West Virginia with its mobile Fun Fitness Bus, soft play toddler zone rentals, high-energy obstacle course, and a passion for building strong, confident kids.

At the heart of the business is the Fun Fitness Bus — a colorful, fully equipped mobile gym that brings fun and active play directly to schools, libraries and community events. Its Obstacle Course Challenge is especially popular in school settings, camps and after-school programs, helping kids build physical literacy and resilience while having a blast. Notably, Fun Fitness Kids Club also operates the state's first mobile soft play toddler rental zone.



How You Can Support

- Book the Fun Fitness Bus, obstacle course, soft play zone or inflatables for your next school event, birthday party or summer program
- Donate to their 501(c)(3), The Fun Fitness Foundation Inc., to help sponsor free play sessions in underserved communities
- Follow and share on social media: facebook.com/FunFitnessKidsClub
- Spread the word to schools, libraries and youth groups across the Charleston area.

Because every child deserves a space to move, grow and shine — and with Fun Fitness Kids Club, the fun comes right to them.

Introducing: BBG Tennessee

Black By God's New Monthly Newsletter for East Tennessee
We're excited to announce the launch of **BBG Tennessee**, a new monthly newsletter dedicated to Black stories, businesses, and voices in East Tennessee, curated by journalist **Angela Dennis**.

Launching August 8th — a date long celebrated in Tennessee as **Emancipation Day**, marking the day enslaved people were freed in parts of the state.

Sign up at BlackByGod.org/tennessee



Angela Dennis
BBG TN Editor

Black Business Spotlight

THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY THE HEARLD DISPATCH, A NEWSROOM WHOSE MISSION IS TO EDUCATE, INFORM, AND INSPIRE OUR PEOPLE BY TELLING WEST VIRGINIA'S STORY.

Chris Haddox: Mining for Folk Music: Russell Brown

In 1935, UMWA President John L. Lewis was speaking at a Labor Day celebration in Charleston. Knowing that Lewis would be at the celebration, an African-American coal miner, a **"tippie man"** named Russell Brown (1904-1988), made the trek to the rally armed with the words to a song he had written.

The song was titled **"The Union Blues."** Brown later said, **"I was lying in bed thinking about the union and the words came to me. I hopped right out of bed and wrote them down."** It was Mr. Brown's hope to sing the song for Lewis, and while we don't know the exact way it unfolded, it is clear that Mr. Brown did sing the song because labor song collector George Korson, a Ukrainian immigrant, was in the crowd and heard it. Korson was so intrigued with the song that five years later, in 1940, he tracked Mr. Brown down at his home in Yolyn, Logan County, and recorded him singing the song.

Mr. Korson donated his life's work of recording and documenting labor songs in West Virginia and Pennsylvania to King's College (which eventually transferred them to the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress). Mr. Brown introduces the song on the recording with these words, **"This is Russell Brown of Yolyn, West Virginia, a coal miner, singing my own composition, The Union Blues."**

President Roosevelt is a friend to the laboring men / He gave us the right to organize, and be real union men / Union, union is all over the wide world / Union, union is all over the wide world / t's back on the farms and in tobacco barns.

I'm glad I'm a union man long may it live on / I'm glad I'm a union man long may it live on / The union will be living when I'm dead and gone.

I've got the union blues I don't care where I go / I've got the union blues / I don't care where I be / It's good for you



and good enough for me

I'm going down the road feeling mighty glad / I'm going down the road feeling might glad / The union is the best that labor ever had.

I'm gonna write a letter, mail it in a month of May / I'm gonna write a letter and mail it the month of May / I'm gonna thank the President for that 7-hour day.

I'm gonna close my song, but won't close my mind / I'm gonna close my song, but won't close my mind / That the laboring man was not left behind.

I was able to track down Mr. Brown's granddaughter in Huntington, where she gave me some family photos, and where we visited the cemetery where he is buried to sing his song over his grave.

I learned that before leaving Yolyn, Mr. Brown worked as a baggage handler at the Trailways bus depot in Logan. His family said he had such a gentle demeanor and was always dressed very nicely and walking around humming and/or singing songs. I wonder if any of you readers have recollections of him you could share with me.

Please contact chris.haddox@mail.wvu.edu if you have any new info.

Read
More
Here



Black Business Spotlight

THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY THE WV PUBLIC BROADCASTING.

Black Beauty Shop On Charleston's West Side Is A Place For Community, Creativity And Legacy

When you walk into Nappy By Nature hair salon on the West Side of Charleston, West Virginia, you're likely to hear lots of talk and laughter. The place is cozy and friendly, and it makes me feel nostalgic. This is where I got my prom hairdo.

Black hair salons, much like Black barber shops, have long been known as central hubs for the community. They're a space where Black women can feel relaxed and accepted.

That's the kind of place that Tina Beatty wanted to create when she opened Nappy By Nature with her friend, Kelly Smoot, in the 1990s. They had both gone to beauty school during their last years of high school and then went to work in other people's shops. But Beatty wanted to be her own boss.

"She was talking about starting her salon," says Smoot. "She said, 'We can do this. Do you want to come, would you come?' And I was like, 'Bet. Let's do this.'"

They wanted a space where Black women would feel comfortable being themselves in their own hair, Beatty says, "wearing their crown proudly, not ashamed of how it makes them look or offend other people."

There are many Black hair salons on Charleston's West Side these days, but back when Beatty and Smoot started their business, there were hardly any. So they wanted a name for their salon that let Black women know it was a place for them. "I wanted something that would identify with our culture, that people would look at the name and know that it was a Black hair salon," Beatty says.

Inspired by the hip hop group, Naughty by Nature, they decided on



Nappy By Nature has been located in this two-story brick building on Charleston's West Side since 1990.

"Nappy By Nature." "I mean, we are nappy by nature — that's just the term of hair," Smoot says. "A lot of people now say 4C or coarse, but it started out as our hair was nappy — so nappy by nature."

Nappy is a word that's long been used to describe Black people's hair — often in a derogatory and offensive way. Under Eurocentric beauty standards, Black hair — with its kinks and coils — has been stigmatized, even within the Black community. For instance, in Spike Lee's 1988 film *School Daze*, two groups of Black college students stage a musical battle, throwing shade about who's got good hair and who's got bad hair.

Some of those negative stereotypes are starting to change. For instance, the CROWN Act, a bill introduced in Congress in 2020 and in 2022, would ban discrimination based on hairstyles and textures. More than 20 states have already passed their own CROWN Act (although West Virginia is not among them).

Black Business Spotlight

THIS STORY ORIGINALLY AIRED IN THE FEB. 23, 2025, EPISODE OF INSIDE APPALACHIA.

But the stigma surrounding Black hair is still there. Smoot says Black hair salons are a place where Black women can feel confident with their natural selves. "There's certain things that we can do and say that we need to do and say [that] we can't say in some spaces or do in some spaces, because everybody is not going to understand where, as a Black woman, where we're coming from."

Historically, Black hair salons were also a vital source of education and information. They were spaces where Black women could learn about health, nutrition, and other important issues. And Smoot says in some ways, they still are. "I want people to remember how I took the time with their hair and tried to teach them not only about their hair but about... sometimes what medication can do to their hair. Because a lot of people don't know."

While Smoot spent many years at Nappy By Nature, she now owns her own salon on the West Side. Meanwhile, Beatty keeps Nappy By Nature up and running with the help of her younger sister, Robin Bonner. "She's been with me ever since she's gotten out of beauty school," Beatty says. "So, it just became almost like a family tradition."

Beatty says that even after all these years, she still loves what she does. "It's just fun. Our hair texture is just fun to play with and to beautify it — to be able to take it and begin to work with it and style it and bring out the beauty of nappy by nature."

This story is part of the Inside Appalachia Folkways Reporting Project, a partnership with West Virginia Public Broadcasting's Inside Appalachia. Subscribe to the podcast to hear more stories of Appalachian folklife, arts and culture.

A normal day at Nappy By Nature Salon with sisters styling hair with their daughters.

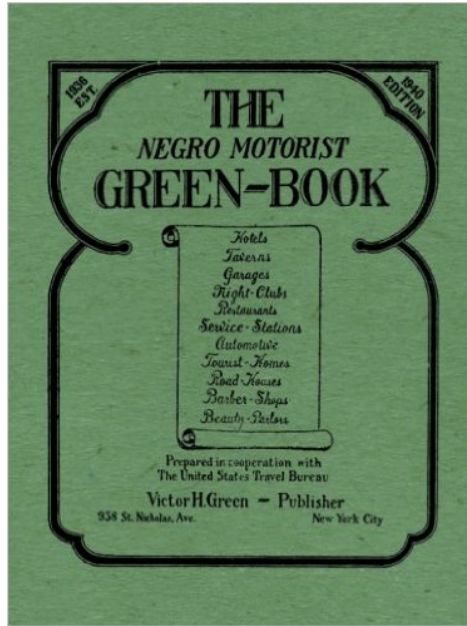
From left to right: Tunisia Beatty, Rakyra Bonner, Tina Beatty, and Robin Bonner.

Photo Credit: Traci Phillips/West Virginia Public Broadcasting



BBG Green Book

BY BBG



In 2024, National Geographic added West Virginia to an expanded **Best of the World travel guide**, as a part of its **20 Best Experiences in 2024** list. The publication covered the Mountain State several times last year and multiple times over its 137-year history. It's always nice to have outsiders acknowledge the beauty and majesty of West Virginia's natural resources in the form of its waterways, state and national parks, and of course, its landmarks such as The Greenbrier and the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. We applaud them and thank them for bringing attention to West Virginia's goodness, however, there is a guide that served a different purpose: **The Negro Motorist Green Book**.

For the next few months, BBG will explore the significance of Victor Hugo Green's essential travel guide in the state of West Virginia. Published between 1936 and 1967, the Negro Motorist Green Book

aided Black motorists and travelers in navigating through the rough terrains of Jim Crow laws, sundown towns and any threat of harm they could encounter traveling South and other regions to visit family and seek recreation. It was both a time-saving and life-saving publication that survived until federal changes in public accommodations laws.

While we are certain Black travelers experienced West Virginia's national landmarks and beautiful scenery, we also believe they had the experience of lodging and hoteling, dining and enjoying entertainment, shopping and more provided by Black business owners. In its heyday, the Green Book contributed to the incomes of Black entrepreneurs by marketing their goods and services around the country. It had an economic impact.

West Virginia made its first appearance on page 19 of the 1938 Negro Motorist Green Book. This particular edition was limited to large cities east of the Mississippi River. In this edition, only Charleston and Huntington entries exist. Over the years to follow, other cities and towns would appear, sometimes taking up the space of two pages filled with Black vendors.

Stay tuned as BBG revisits WV's presence in the Green Book as we provide a modern interpretation and tour of our state's Black communities and businesses; past and present.

If you're inclined to assist us in this project, let us know if you are a descendant of a business owner featured in the Green Book. Let us know if you've had travel experiences using the guide.

Your contribution is appreciated and important as we tell another part of a story most leave out.

BBG Black on the Map

Help Us Discover TODAY's West Virginia Black-Owned Tourism Gems!

Join BBG's exciting mission to identify and celebrate the Black-owned tourism and travel businesses making waves across West Virginia right NOW. We're on the hunt for TODAY's standout locations that showcase the richness of Black culture and entrepreneurship within the state. Reach out to BBG with your suggestions and become a pivotal part of our Black on MAP journey to illuminate the best of TODAY's Black tourism and travel businesses.

Let's put the spotlight on West Virginia's Black-owned wonders that are shaping the narrative right NOW — join us in putting them on the MAP today!

Black on the Map
Google Maps Link



Best of the World



20 Best in 2024



NY Public Library



Green Book



Contact BBG

The Negro Motorist Green Book: 1938 Retrieved from digitalcollections.nypl.org Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. (1938).

VT. — W. VA.		USE IT AS YOUR IDENTIFICATION		WEST VIRGINIA
VERMONT				TOURIST HOMES
BURLINGTON				E. Washington, 1657 8th Ave.
HOTELS				RESTAURANTS
Pate's, 86 Archibald St.				J. Gross, 839 7th Ave.
WEST VIRGINIA				TAVERNS
CHARLESTON				Monroe's, 1616 8th Ave.
HOTELS				NIGHT CLUBS
Ferguson				Appomattox Club, 1659 8th Ave.
TOURIST HOMES				BARBER SHOPS
A. Brown, 1001 Washington St.				J. Harriston, 1615 8th Ave.
HUNTINGTON				BEAUTY PARLORS
HOTELS				Mrs. Pack, 1612 Artisan Ave.
Fair				SERVICE STATION
Massey's, 837 7th Ave.				Sterling, Cor 12th St. & 3rd Ave.
Southern, 21 8th Ave.				GARAGE
The Ross, 911 8th Ave.				South Side, 716 8th Ave.
				THEATERS
				Fox, 1640 8th Ave.
				DANCE HALLS
				Alpha, 1636 8th Av.

What Does Success Look Like in Black Business?

BY DR. ALAN LETTON & DR. CLINT ARNOLD

“They Fund What They Think You Need”

Philanthropy and community lending often miss the mark. Why? Because outsiders define the problem and the solution — without asking the community. That’s what Edgar Villanueva calls out in *Decolonizing Wealth*.

“Granting agencies fund what they think your problem is — and judge your success by their standards.”

Success Ain’t One-Size-Fits-All

Many Black-owned businesses define success differently:

- Sending kids to college
- Taking family vacations
- Living safely and comfortably

Not every business wants to become a global brand. Sometimes, \$300K/year is the dream — and that’s valid.

“We measure success by stability, not just scale.”

Dr. Clint Arnold’s Research Says...

Here’s what West Virginia-based research uncovered:

- **Financial planning is foundational** – Budgeting + forecasting = business survival
- **Education multiplies impact** – Even short-term programs move the needle
- **Success is community-rooted** – Think family wealth, not IPOs

The Real Barriers

- **Discrimination in Lending** – Black entrepreneurs are denied loans *even with equal credit*
- **Educational Gaps** – Fewer Black men in college = fewer business owners in high-growth sectors
- **Outdated Metrics** – Traditional definitions of success erase cultural values

What We Can Do

- Create culturally relevant success metrics
- Invest in financial literacy programs
- Build certificate courses through HBCUs
- Support community-owned businesses with real dollars

“Equity is not charity. It’s smart business.”

Did You Know?

If minority-owned businesses reached parity, the U.S. could see \$1.5 trillion in GDP growth. It’s time to fund differently — starting here in Appalachia.

Read
More Here



“There’s a Farmer in the Flag: What the West Virginia Freeman Still Teaches Us”

BY CRYSTAL GOOD

I love looking at old Black newspapers. There’s something about them — something steady, something alive. They remind me we’ve always been here. And that Black By God can exist.

If you’ve never done it, go to chroniclingamerica.loc.gov. You can actually search for African-American newspapers in West Virginia. One of my favorites is the West Virginia Freeman, established in 1881 in Parkersburg. Edited by Isaac H. Johnson and managed by W.F. Atkinson, the Freeman was a temperance paper at its core — but it was also a clearinghouse for stories, poetry, women’s leadership, agriculture, and community news.

In one issue, there’s a column called “A Word to West Virginians,” written by someone who signed their name simply as **Clericus**, respectfully. And it tickles me. It reads like a sermon, a love letter, and a piece of practical advice all at once. Clericus writes:

“West Virginia is one of the healthiest states in the Union.”

He urges readers — especially farmers — not to leave:

“If you have a home, though ever so homely, hold on to it. There is a better day coming.”

And for those tempted to sell everything and go West:



“After burying half your family, and breaking down yourself, you will be glad to get back, and call your old homely home blessed.”

He wasn’t just talking about land — he was talking about value. About staying

rooted. About recognizing the abundance of West Virginia’s beef, pork, fruit, coal, timber, and what he called:

“Millions of wealth upon the surface and billions under it.”

The Freeman knew what mattered. And they knew who mattered. That’s why they made space for farmers, why they had a full Farmer’s Page, and why they wrote things like:

“We have plenty here.”

They also didn’t shy away from asking for support:

“Don’t forget, good farmer friends, to turn in when you come to our pretty sign... and unburden your pocket to the amount of a subscription.”

That line makes me smile every time. So in that same spirit, I’ll say it plain: If *Black By God* means something to you... If you believe in Black land, Black stories, and Black businesses...

If you want to see the farmer in the flag brought forward again...

Then **support this Black newspaper**. Subscribe. Donate. Advertise. Tell a friend.

Unburden your pocket — just like they asked in 1881.



Black Music Month Spotlight: The Unit Band Keeps the Rhythm Alive in West Virginia

BY BBG

June is Black Music Month — a time to honor the powerful legacy of Black artists whose sound shaped the soul of America. And here in the Mountain State, one band continues to carry that legacy forward with every note: The Unit Band.

Deeply rooted in West Virginia, The Unit Band is more than a musical group — they are a living bridge between generations. Their performances bring together gospel, funk, soul, and R&B with the unmistakable energy of Black Appalachian culture. Whether they're playing at a church celebration, leading a Juneteenth crowd in dance, or lifting spirits in the holler, The Unit Band reflects the sound of Black West Virginia in motion.

This June, Black By God honors The Unit Band not only for their musical excellence, but for their role in preserving and celebrating Black culture across our region. In a state where Black stories are often erased, their music reminds us we've always been here — and we've always had something to say.

Catch The Unit Band live at the 2025 Juneteenth Community Festival in Charleston!

Follow
Them on
Facebook



Y'all Ready for This Look? Because I Ate the WV Fashion Week Runway UP

BY JAYLI PHILLIPS

FASHION BUZZ KID CORRESPONDENT

Over Memorial Day weekend, I hit the runway at the Charleston Town Center Mall — and let me tell you, it was even more exciting the second time around! With one show already under my belt, I showed up with more confidence, stronger poses, and even bigger energy.

I rocked two standout looks that made me feel like a superstar.

First up was a bold, futuristic outfit by Star Dreamers International. With vibrant colors and intergalactic vibes, I felt like I stepped onto a space-age runway. The lights, the beats, the crowd — it was a whole moment.

Then came a fierce, sparkly ensemble from Kerry at The Fab House. Her “Pieces of My Closet” collection brought all the sass and glam. When I hit the runway in her design, I felt like I was starring in my own music video. I twirled, I smiled, and I gave that catwalk some serious LIFE!

But let's talk about this LOOK. I wore a bold pink high-low tulle skirt paired with a custom BBG-print top, styled by Kerry Wilkinson. The whole fit was giving main character energy.

Still, this show wasn't just about me. WV Fashion Week was full of incredible talent — from designers like Star Dreamers International to fierce models of every shade, shape, and story. Some of my favorite moments were off the runway — talking to the people who make this magic happen. Like WV Fashion Week producer Rojen Morris, and my fellow models, including Neveah Harmon, 2023 Miss West Virginia USA.

WV Fashion Week reminded me that fashion isn't just about clothes. It's about telling your story without saying a word — and mine says: young, Black, Appalachian, and unstoppable.

So yes... I ATE. And trust me, I'm still hungry.

This is Jayli, your Fashion Buzz Kid Correspondent for Black By God: The West Virginian — bringing you runway realness, Black girl joy, and fearless fashion from the heart of Appalachia to the world.



INTRODUCING BBG SPORTS

Black By God Sports is a growing arm of Black By God: The West Virginian, dedicated to uplifting and spotlighting Black athletes, coaches, teams, and community sports stories across West Virginia and Central Appalachia. From youth leagues to professional arenas, BBG Sports goes beyond scores and stats to highlight the cultural, historical, and social impact of Black excellence in sports.

Whether it's high school champions, college standouts, or hometown legends, BBG Sports exists to document the hustle, heritage, and heart behind every game.

Congratulations to the following sports teams...



Left: Charleston Mayor Amy Goodwin and the Charleston City Council recognized West Side Middle School girls 4x100 relay team for being State Champions.

Below: Congratulations, Huntington High School for being the 2025 WVSSAC Class AAA Girls Runner Up Champions at the State Track Meet.



CHARLESTON CITY
HALL
Charleston, West Virginia

Below: Congratulations to one our HBCU's Bluefield State University for being named the 2025 CIAA men's golf champions!



True's Hoops and Harmony



True Phillips, and his father Justin watching the Lakers vs Pacers game in Indianapolis in March 2025.

True's Hoops and Harmony comic strip celebrates Juneteenth in a fun and powerful way—right on the court during the NBA Finals! It shows a big Juneteenth Festival where kids and families come together to play, celebrate, and remember where we come from.

True, a young baller, sees the crowd and says, "Oh wow! Look at all the people at the Juneteenth Festival!" Then someone invites him to play in the Juneteenth Hoops Jam. True says, "Sure...ballin' for our ancestors."

That moment is about using the game we love to celebrate the freedom our ancestors fought for.

This comic reminds us that basketball isn't just a game—it's a way to express pride, history, and community. Whether you're watching the NBA Finals or dribbling at a neighborhood court, you're part of something bigger.

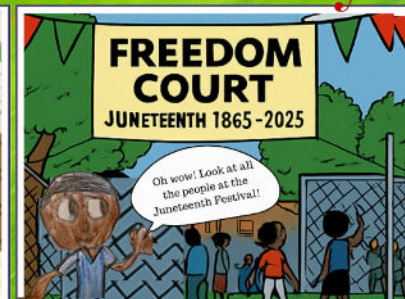
Still rising. Still ballin'. Still free. That's the spirit of Juneteenth—and Hoops and Harmony.



Juneteenth & The NBA Finals

Vol. 1 Ep 3
T. Phillips

True's Hoops and Harmony



Juneteenth & The NBA Finals

Vol. 1 Ep 3
T. Phillips

BBG AGRICULTURE

BY BBG

Farmers Market Vouchers Now Available for WV Seniors

Access to fresh food is a right, not a luxury. Thanks to the return of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), eligible West Virginia seniors can now receive \$30 in vouchers to buy locally grown fruits, vegetables, herbs, and honey at farmers markets and roadside stands across the state.

Funded by the USDA and administered through county senior services, the SFMNP supports senior nutrition and the survival of small and local farms, including Black and family-run operations that are essential to Appalachia's food system.

The vouchers are valid from June 2 to October 31, 2025, and can be used at any authorized location, even outside the county where they were issued.

"This program boosts senior nutrition and our local farming economy," said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt.

To be eligible, participants must be 60 or older and meet income guidelines. Vouchers must be picked up in the senior's home county. Contact your local senior center or county aging office to apply or find participating locations.

More info is available at agriculture.wv.gov or by calling 304-558-2210.



Subscribe to *Mini* BlackByGod BBG

What Your Subscription Supports:

- 13 full-color print issues mailed to your door
- A FREE Juneteenth/Black Business Directory issue distributed at festivals across the region
- Local Black artists, writers, and creatives are being paid for their work
- Community control of media in a region where our stories are often erased and ignored



\$40
***400 People**
13 Issues

* Limited Spots! First come first serve.

This is not just a magazine – it's infrastructure for Black-owned media in Appalachia.

REAL ID Deadline Is Here: What West Virginians Need to Know Before They Travel

If you're planning to fly, take a cruise, or visit a federal building this summer, make sure your ID is up to date, because as of May 7, 2025, the federal government is officially enforcing the REAL ID requirement.

That means your standard West Virginia driver's license will no longer be accepted for:

- Boarding domestic flights
- Entering federal buildings or courthouses
- Accessing military bases
- Taking most cruises from U.S. ports

The REAL ID Act was passed after 9/11 to strengthen national security. After years of delays and extensions, the deadline has now arrived, and travelers who haven't made the switch could be turned away at the gate.

What Is a REAL ID?

A REAL ID is a state-issued driver's license or identification card that meets federal security standards. It looks similar to a regular WV license, but features a gold star in the upper right corner. This star indicates that your ID is REAL ID-compliant.

If your license doesn't have the star, it won't work for federal purposes, even if it hasn't expired.

How to Get One in West Virginia

You can receive same-day approval for a

REAL ID at your local DMV, as long as you bring the required documents. Here's what to have with you:

- A certified birth certificate or a valid U.S. passport
- Your Social Security card or another official document showing your SSN (like a W-2)
- Two proofs of West Virginia residency (such as a utility bill, lease, or bank statement)
- Legal documents showing any name changes (such as a marriage certificate)

Appointments can be made online at transportation.wv.gov/DMV, but walk-ins are also welcome. Many DMV offices may already have your documents on file, so call ahead to check.

Still Have Questions?

Contact the West Virginia DMV at (304) 558-3900 or visit their website to confirm your documents and find your nearest location. Don't wait until it's too late.

The Bottom Line

If you want to move freely in 2025, your old ID won't get you far. BBG Tech wants to make sure our communities are prepared, not stranded.

Check your ID. Make the upgrade. Travel with confidence.

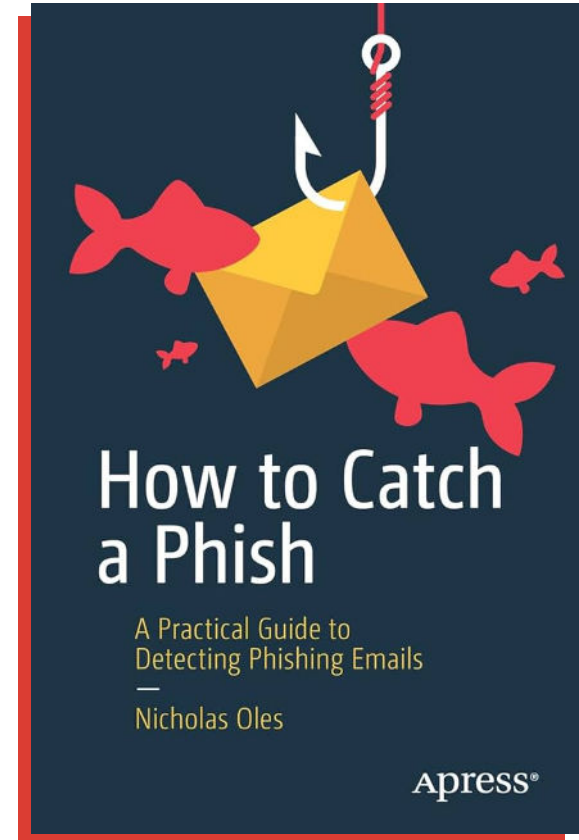
Phishing

Scammers have been using ChatGPT to craft typo-free phishing lures that mimic banks or retailers, spiking attacks.

Last year, the FBI estimated that phishing campaigns made around \$16 billion! Check sender domains and hover over links to spot fakes, as AI's perfect grammar can sometimes bypass spam filters.

Free tools like Microsoft's Defender can scan for threats, but it's most important to educate yourself and not fall for scams. Never open any link within an email you're not expecting or from someone you don't know.

One of my mentors, Nick Oles, the Team Lead for Cyber and Technical Operations at the Department of Defense, has the book *How to Catch a Phish*, which is the graphic to the right. It's a great read!



How to Catch a Phish by Nick Oles



Left: FBI's Annual Internet Crime Report



Right: How to Catch a Phish on Amazon

Folk Reporters: Who Gets to Be a Journalist, Anyway?

BY ELLIE HEFFERNAN

CITIZEN JOURNALISM

I got my first paid newsroom job during the summer of 2020. As a student at one of the country's top journalism schools, I beat out a crowded field for the privilege of earning \$11 an hour as a reporting intern. (Shout out to Mom and Dad for the rent-free living!)

I was the only woman on the reporting or editing staff. And in a city as Black as Baltimore, not a single Black person held an editorial role.

To be clear — I had a great experience. My editors were supportive. They nominated me for awards. And they made sure I left with a strong portfolio of clips that helped me land my first full-time job. But I left that internship with some serious questions about who gets access to journalism in the first place.

Despite some progress — about a quarter of newsroom roles are now held by people of color and 46% by women, according to Pew Research Center — newsrooms across America still largely reflect power and privilege.

Consider this: nearly every full-time journalist in the country has a college degree. Fewer than 4% do not, according to the 2022 American Journalist Study. And certain degrees open more doors than others. A 2019 VOICES investigation found that two-thirds of interns at top national newsrooms came from the country's most selective schools. One in five interns at The New York Times or The Washington Post came from Ivy League institutions, Duke, Stanford, MIT, or the University of Chicago.

Those numbers raise red flags. Do you really need a \$300,000 degree to tell a story? Does Harvard's \$83,000-a-year price tag make someone more qualified to report on Medicaid than a mother who depends on it?

To me, good journalism starts with curiosity. It requires caring about your community — not just to extract a quote, but to understand, connect and represent it honestly. It's about capturing the truth behind people's lives.

As West Virginia's 2025 legislative session unfolded earlier this year, lawmakers debated Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; child care; Medicaid and more. These are issues that shape our lives every day. But does a diploma automatically make someone more equipped to report on these topics than a Black high schooler? A coalfield photographer? A full-time caregiver?

I don't think so.

That's why I was proud to lead Black By God's Folk Reporters program during this year's session. This citizen journalism initiative trains everyday West Virginians to cover the West Virginia Legislature and tell stories that matter, from perspectives that are too often left out.

And let me tell you — it worked. Folk Reporters showed up to committee meetings, wrote powerful articles and made space for their communities at the Capitol. Managing this program was one of the most meaningful experiences I've had in journalism. I loved it so much that I'm not done. Even though the session is over, BBG's Folk Reporters program is continuing.

So if you're even a little curious about becoming a Folk Reporter — whether you want to write, shoot photos, speak truth, or just learn how it all works — reach out.

Who gets to be a journalist, anyway?

Anyone who wants to be.

Interested in becoming a Folk Reporter or learning more?

Email: Ellie@BlackByGod.org



Juneteenth Canceled? Maybe That's Okay...

BY CRYSTAL GOOD

COMMENTARY

I love a good Black festival — music in the park, barbecue smoke in the air, vendors lined up, elders in lawn chairs, and kids with red popsicles running wild. That's church. That's community. That's us.

So when Juneteenth festivals get canceled — when funding disappears, support dries up, and organizers are left hanging — I get mad. You should, too.

But maybe it's time to tell the truth: Juneteenth isn't West Virginia's actual Emancipation Day. It never was.

February 3, 1865 — the day West Virginia officially abolished slavery. Not June 19th. Two years after we broke from Virginia and claimed to be a free state. Two years of myth while people were still enslaved.

Celebrating Juneteenth without naming February 3rd is like throwing a birthday party on the wrong day — and ignoring your own birth certificate.

We should honor Juneteenth, but we must also claim our truth. Tennessee celebrates August 8th, and Florida celebrates May 20th. Those communities know their dates. West Virginia has one, too.

So if the fireworks fade and the festival budgets vanish, maybe we're not losing something — perhaps we can start the story again with the truth.

No Menthol Sunday

BY CRYSTAL GOOD

I started smoking to be a bad girl. Young. I had troubles in my youth — things I didn't have the language for then. Smoking felt like control. It felt like rebellion. I thought it would turn heads, spark questions — make people ask, *Why is she smoking?* But nobody asked. And so, smoking just became part of me.

It became my break from the world — a moment of peace away from kids, work, and stress. Out on the porch, there was always someone else — another smoker, another story. Smoking permitted me to pause.

Over time, it also gave me company in my grief.

I shared cigarettes with my father before I lost him. He smoked. So did his wife. My brother. Some of my most familiar memories are wrapped in the smell of cigarette smoke. I found myself smoking with ghosts.

And if I'm being real, I was a closet smoker. I didn't want to be seen smoking, but I couldn't stop. I was hoping that by *No Menthol Sunday*, I could write that I was smoke-free.

So far... so good.

When I was a young model in New York, I used to think I looked grown buying cigarettes from the corner bodega. Newport was the go-to — bright green box, icy cool hit. I wanted to be one of those cigarette girls: smooth, effortless, beautiful. You know the ones — in the ads.

That look had been sold to us for years.

The ads made it seem like smoking menthols was stylish. Like smoking meant you had it together. But what we were being sold was addiction, wrapped in culture, beauty, and Black cool.

No Menthol Sunday is a national call to action led by The Center for Black Health & Equity — held every third Sunday in May — to raise awareness about the deadly impact of menthol cigarettes on Black communities. It's not just about quitting smoking; it's about exposing how the tobacco industry has targeted us for decades, how menthol makes it easier to start and harder to stop, and how we deserve better.

For me, it wasn't just a campaign. It was a mirror.

It made me ask: *Am I really ready to practice what I preach?*

It made me take inventory:

Ten bucks a pack. Breath mints. Air fresheners. Lighters. Excuses.

It was costing me more than money. It was costing *me*.

So I tried hypnosis — not patches, not gum — something deeper. And guess what? It worked.

After a few sessions, I came to understand smoking wasn't just a habit. It was a placeholder. It filled the space where relief had been.

I had to grieve all over again — this time, for my old friend: *Cigarette*.

Now, I'm proud to say: I'm a non-smoker. A *permanent* one.

That was my hypnosis mantra — and I'm holding onto it.

That's why I believe in No Menthol Sunday — it gave me the push I didn't know I needed. And it's why I'm urging others to pay attention. Especially here in places like West Virginia, where public health campaigns often skip over us. If someone invested in our healing like the

No Menthol Sunday

tobacco industry has invested in our harm, they'd have lifelong allies.

The statistics are staggering:

- **85% of Black smokers prefer menthol cigarettes.**
- **Menthol makes it easier to start — and harder to quit.**
- **Smoking remains the #1 cause of preventable death in Black communities.**

So if you're thinking about quitting, you're not alone. You can start today. Call **1-800-QUIT-NOW**. Or ask me about hypnosis. Ask your ancestors for strength. Ask your future self for mercy.

I'm putting myself on the front street here because I believe that's how we clear the way, with honesty and breath.



Keep an eye out for next year's No Menthol Sunday event.

Black By God, The West Virginian

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GOING UNHEARD?**

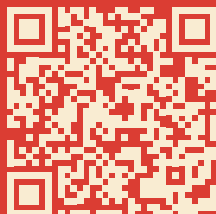
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