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Western High School 175th Anniversary “Shine the Light” Gala Honors A Bright Past, Present and Future



Western High School Foundation will present Western High School's 175th Anniversary “Shine the Light” Gala on Thursday April 29, 2021 at 7:00 p.m to honor America's oldest all-girl public high school and its shining legacy which has inspired women since 1844. (Right); Headliner of the event, Anna Deavere Smith, Western alum, NYU professor and star of stage and television, producer of Broadway hit “Notes from the Field” donated her appearance and conducted a revealing roundtable with five current Western students about fulfilling their dreams in challenging times. (Left): Espí Frazier, acclaimed Baltimore artist's Red Queen Wall Hanging will be auctioned beginning April 22nd through midnight of the Gala evening April 29th. To bid visit www.westernhighcelebration.com

Five self-preservation tips for Black people watching the Chauvin trial

By Michelle Hollinger

America's traumatization of Black people continues with the trial of Derrick Chauvin, the former Minneapolis officer who nonchalantly bore his knee into George Floyd's neck for nearly ten minutes, killing the handcuffed man as bystanders pleaded for his life. Watching the proceedings can evoke a litany of unpleasant feelings in Black people, including sadness, anger and a frustrating sense of powerlessness.

The trial is likely to trigger Black people whose trust of the justice system is shaky, at best, but realistically closer to non-existent. Based on the horrendous chain of dehumanizing treatment that culminated in Floyd's death, Chauvin *should* be convicted of murder at the highest level the law allows; however, Black people know that when it comes to killing Black people, video evidence is not enough to convince fellow Americans charged with rendering a fair verdict that what they saw was murder.

And the trauma continues. While most of Black America is collectively holding its breath as the Chauvin defense predictably blames George Floyd for placing his neck beneath Chauvin's knee, another barrage of Blacks being terrorized by the police has surfaced.

Twenty-year old Daunte Wright, an unarmed Black man, was shot and killed by the police just a few miles from where Floyd was murdered. Add to that, shocking, but not surprising, footage of police officers repeatedly pepper spraying a uniformed military officer pours pounds of salt into Black people's collective wounds exasperated each time they witness police eagerly and cavalierly assaulting Black bodies.

Most Black people are bone tired of seeing people who look like them killed by police officers, period. The very real fear that the officers might escape accountability compounds the anguish and amplifies the longstanding dread resting so consistently in Black folks' bellies that it feels normal. As normal as it might feel, normalized trauma is not normal and it's important for Black people to protect their mental and



Most Black people are bone tired of seeing people who look like them killed by police officers and the very real fear that the officers might escape accountability compounds the anguish and amplifies the longstanding dread resting so consistently in Black folks' bellies that it feels normal.

Photo Credit: ClipArt.com

emotional wellbeing. To that end, here are five vital self-care steps that could help Black people lessen the feeling of helplessness the trial arouses:

Express your outrage, preferably in writing— It's helpful to get the feelings out instead of holding them in. After you write down your feelings, toss them into the trash. If you express them verbally to someone else, do it once without constantly rehashing throughout the length of the trial. From a spiritual perspective, what you focus on most expands, so constantly talking about how the trial is aggravating you keeps you aggravated and feeling the angst that comes along with that. Don't ignore how you feel but try not to remain stuck in it. Explore how you're feeling and express the emotions productively.

Limit your viewing of the trial— Determine a good system that keeps you informed without spending hours each day watching the hearing. Either read about the day or week's hearings or find a reputable online source to watch a single recap. Viewing the trial for hours at a time can significantly impact your emotional wellbeing and add to your sense of helplessness.

Pray for the family— One of the most distressing aspects of the proceedings is knowing George Floyd's family has to re-live the loss of their loved one by hearing excruciating details and watching the defense blame him for his own death. Praying for them allows you to express your empathy while sending positive energy and thoughts their way. Additionally, research has shown that the collective power of prayer can positively impact a situation. It won't bring Mr. Floyd back, but it could help his family feel more peace and help you feel supportive. The positive energy you send them also remains with you, alleviating some of your dread. Create a short, easy to recall prayer for George Floyd's family that you recite frequently

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throughout the duration of the trial.

Support an organization doing effective work to achieve justice by making a monetary donation—

Feeling like nothing's being done to eradicate the situation that led to Mr. Floyd's death contributes to feeling helpless. A part of the helplessness many feel is the belief that something like it could continue to occur. Find an organization doing work you believe in and support their efforts. Whether you give a one-time donation or set up recurring payments, contributing to worthwhile work to eradicate racism and police brutality feels good and is a tangible way to be a part of the solution.

Affirm your personal safety— Some of the stress you experience from watching the trial is based on concern that something similar could happen to you or a loved one. Pouring your thoughts and energy into a scenario that might not happen might feel productive, like you're preparing yourself to deal with an inevitable; but your thoughts are far more powerful than you might realize. Instead, use your thoughts and words to align with a here and now reality, the energy of which expands with your thoughts and words. Reassure yourself that you're safe by affirming "I am safe now," whenever your thoughts go to "what if" circumstances. Your mental and emotional wellbeing is under your control and you can remind yourself that in this present moment, you are indeed safe.

Michelle Hollinger is the CWO (Chief Worthiness Officer) of The Institute for Worthy Living and the author of "Sis, You're Worth It: Seven Ideas for Manifesting Your Best Life." Learn more at www.theinstituteforworthyliving.com.

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Guest Editorials/Commentary

COVID-19 Testing and Black America

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

The COVID-19 pandemic across America and throughout the world is still a serious danger to public health for all communities, but especially for African American and other people of color communities. African Americans are still disproportionately negatively impacted by this deadly virus.

This is why more COVID-19 testing for Black America is so important in 2021: African Americans comprise 13 percent of the U.S. population, but more than half of all COVID-19 cases, and nearly 60 percent of all COVID-related deaths in the U.S., were in cities with large Black populations. Now that federal-government approved vaccines are available, it does not mean that COVID-19 testing is no longer needed.

The National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) is very concerned about the current state of health disparities and inequities that are realities for the majority of African Americans. Facts, data, and truth about the pandemic are vital to our future.

According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, a majority of Black Americans (61 percent), now say, they plan to get a COVID-19 vaccine (or that they've already received one), compared to only 42 percent in November 2020. As trust increases, we need to also increase access to COVID-19 vaccinations and testing in our communities to create better health outcomes.

The Black Press and the Black Church are two fundamental trusted institutions in our communities. We are pleased to learn about a new emerging partnership with Black church leaders creating greater access to much-needed COVID-19 testing in our communities. A partnership between Quest Diagnostics, Choose Healthy Life and the United Way of New York City is bringing COVID-19 testing and education to Black communities in cities across the U.S., and they are working with trusted voices in Black churches to increase participation.

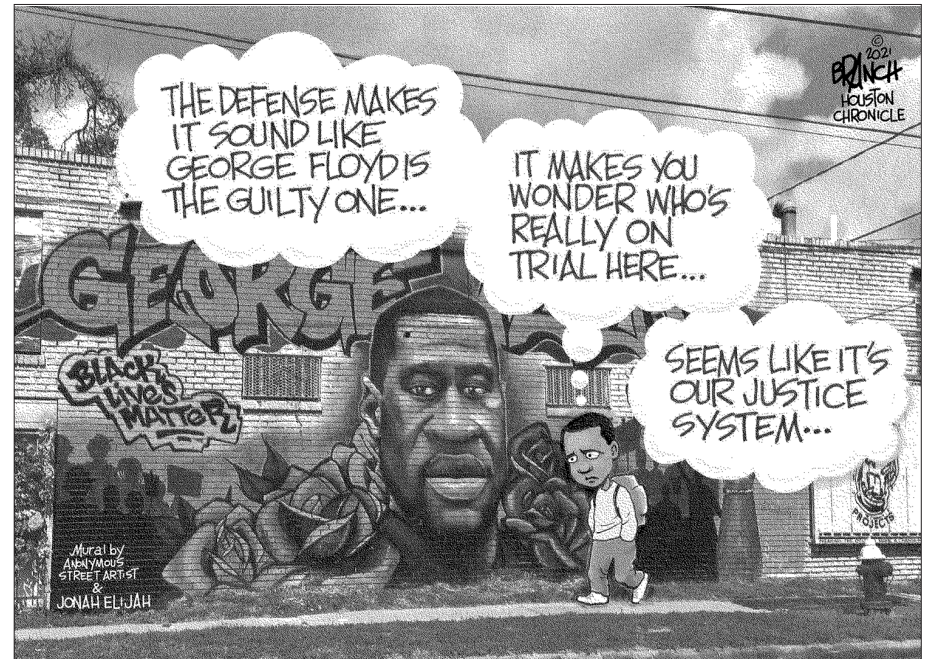
The pandemic has also made it even clearer that Black Americans need access to additional resources to take control of their health. In Chicago for example, Black residents make up 30 percent of the population but account for 70 percent of COVID-related deaths, and the majority of Black COVID-19 patients who have died in Chicago also had underlying health conditions, like respiratory problems, hypertension, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), heart disease is the leading cause of death for Black Americans, and Black people experience risk factors that contribute to heart disease like high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol more often and earlier in life compared to White people. Thus, overall healthcare testing is needed throughout Black America.

Getting tested for important health issues— and understanding the results— empowers people to make informed and sometimes critical healthcare decisions. In fact, 70 percent of medical decisions are based on results from diagnostic tests. Because there aren't always obvious symptoms of a health issue, testing is one of the most effective ways to identify health concerns that may need to be addressed.

Quest Diagnostics is committed to creating partnerships with others to increase access in Black and other underserved communities. It's time for the entire healthcare system to step up with similar commitments— with access to treatment and preventative care— to help Black communities move past this pandemic on an even ground with White America. Access, testing, and equity are keys to achieving and maintaining good health for all.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr is President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), and Executive Producer and host of The Chavis Chronicles (TCC) on PBS TV stations weekly across the United States.



Community Affairs

Nearly 11 percent of older Black adults lack health insurance

Washington, D.C.— A new analysis from AARP's Public Policy Institute finds that nearly half of older adults purchasing health insurance through the non-group health insurance market faced unaffordable health coverage in 2019, compared to only 30 percent of younger adults.

As a result, a growing share of older adults remained uninsured: 9 percent of all 50–64-year-olds, more than half of all older adults who don't have access to job-based or public health coverage.

Prior to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), about one in five older Black adults was uninsured. That declined after the ACA was passed but has leveled off in recent years— 10.8 percent of older Black adults did not have health insurance in 2019.

Lack of affordable coverage is one reason why many adults ages, 50–64 remain uninsured.

AARP's analysis found that in 2019, a 64-year-old earning slightly above the threshold to be eligible for premium subsidies under the ACA faced an average premium that was nearly 30 percent of their income.

Two recent policy changes could help older adults purchase affordable coverage. A provision of the American Rescue Act caps the amount an individual pays for health insurance in the marketplace at 8.5 percent of income for two years.

This provision went into effect April 1, overlapping with a special enrollment period that allows people to purchase health insurance through the non-group market until August 15, 2021.

"While the Affordable Care Act has greatly reduced the number of older adults who are uninsured, coverage has remained unaffordable for far too many people aged 50–64, including many from multicultural communities," said Edna Kane-Williams, Chief Diversity Officer of AARP. "We want to make sure that the millions of currently uninsured older adults know that new subsidies are available to them beginning April 1."

AARP will conduct an informational campaign beginning April 1 to let older adults know about the special enrollment period and new subsidies that could greatly reduce the cost of health insurance for millions of Americans.

Visit www.AARP.org/ACA for more information about how to get health insurance during this period.

Life After the Village: Tales from an Ex-Village People Cop

By Miles Jaye
Texas Metro News & Garland Journal

Until you've reached the chapter called The End, there is always a next chapter to your life story. Many people get so caught up in the automation of their day-to-day existence as one thing or another, a schoolteacher, an accountant, a nurse or physician that they fail to consider what may come next.

It's as though that vocation, career, or profession you chose in your twenties may last forever. Nothing could be further from the truth. Only a debilitating illness, accident or death itself can preclude a next chapter in your life story. That is why retirement comes with such a devastating blow, for so many of us.

This is a tale of the chapters following my years with a group known as the Village People. I was the "Cop" and lead singer from 1982-1984. To be clear and accurate, I was the third Village People "Cop" after Victor Willis, the original

and composer of many of the group's biggest hits, and Ray Simpson, Victor's replacement and younger brother of hit singer/songwriter Valerie Simpson of Ashford and Simpson fame.

I was a new kid on the block. It wasn't long after a five-year stint in the U.S. Air Force and a year or two of surfing

Stewart, singing hits like "Summertime" and "Sitting in the Park." R&B touched my soul.

Growing up in the church, I heard more than my share of gospel music. To this day, it's gospel music that speaks to my spirit. So, with a head for classical, a heart for jazz, R&B enriching my soul

one of the most widely recognized names in music entertainment, singing some of the most popular songs of all times, including "YMCA," "Macho Man," and "In the Navy," consider this—I have no idea how I ended up there.

I would never have guessed it, and I'm sure that I wouldn't have chosen it, but there I was on stages all over the world, singing to sold out crowds, at break-neck speeds in keys way too high for me, but somehow, I did it—I survived it.

So, I survived Brooklyn, the Air Force, and the Village People, what could possibly be next? Teddy Pendergrass of course.

Okay, you can't make this stuff up. The point I'm making is that life is filled with unforeseeable twists and turns.

I'm writing a book called "Life After the Village People - Tales From an Ex-Village People Cop." In it, I share some of the uglier, more painful, make you wanna give up twists and turns.

In times of doubt and despair, having lost all reason to care, among other things, I remembered the famous Winston Churchill quote, "Never give in—never, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy."

He also said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it's the courage to continue that counts." Smart guy!

Website: www.milesjaye.net, Podcast: <https://bit.ly/2zkhSRv>, Email: milesjaye360@gmail.com

"As much as I hated auditions—I was game. I had a wife, a young son, and a daughter on the way for motivation, so I went, not knowing it was for the Village People. I was the most unlikely candidate for the Village People gig and, to this day, I don't know if I would have even gone to the audition had I known what it was all about."

the New York jazz club scene and Europe's jazz festivals that a musician buddy of mine, Bashiri Johnson, Michael Jackson's percussionist, turned me on to an audition for a group looking for a new lead singer.

As much as I hated auditions... I was game. I had a wife, a young son, and a daughter on the way for motivation, so I went, not knowing it was for the Village People. I was the most unlikely candidate for the Village People gig and, to this day, I don't know if I would have even gone to the audition had I known what it was all about. I always thought of myself as a jazz guy. My father and brother were jazzmen. They both played sax. I was a classically trained violinist, so I had a classical head, but a heart for jazz. I grew up listening to my brother's Trane, Miles, Bird, and Monk albums.

My sister's love was R&B. She actually took me to my very first concert at the Apollo in Harlem. The show headlined an R&B icon named Billy

and gospel igniting my spirit, where did Village People music fit in? In short, it didn't!

Much like the John Phillip Sousa military music I played for five years in the U.S. Air Force Band, it served its purpose as a means to an end.

If I had to choose, I would venture to say I had a greater appreciation for the Air Force Band music than the Village People music. First of all, the Air Force Band played a surprisingly wide variety of music from the typical military marches to classical concert band repertoire to the pop Top Ten list.

I played flute and piccolo in the band.

It's when I was shipped out to the Philippines that I began my singing career, if you can call it that. What I will say about Village People music is one—it is very well arranged and produced, and two—it was quite a challenge to a relatively new singer... me!

More than sharing my personal experiences in that two year stretch with

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Community Action Agency celebrates 55 years of helping Maryland residents

By Stacy M. Brown

It wasn't long ago that a woman with little means moved from New Jersey to Anne Arundel County.

Reportedly, she had one bag of possessions, the clothes on her back, and no plan.

Through help from the Arundel House of Hope and a chance meeting with an employee at the Community Action Agency who directed her to the agency's housing department, the once down-on-her-luck woman had a job and funds to cover her rent and settle into a new home.

Celebrating 55 years, the Anne Arundel County Community Action Agency has long become known for etching out a pathway to success for the disadvantaged. And despite the pandemic, the agency has continued to carry out its mission to empower individuals by reducing poverty and building resilient communities.

"The pandemic has demanded that we do almost everything new," said the agency's CEO, Dr. Charlestine Fairley. "We decided to equip all of our essential staff by putting the appropriate equipment in each of their homes so that we could work from home at the very beginning of the pandemic."

Dr. Fairley said the agency was forced to lay off some employees, but ultimately rehired them.

"We didn't miss a beat in providing services," Dr. Fairley remarked. "As time passed and we were able to bring back the laid-off staff, we equipped their homes as well with computers, printers, telephones, and some with scanners so that we could continue to work."



Dr. Charlestine Fairley, CEO of the Anne Arundel County Community Action Agency. Celebrating 55 years, the Anne Arundel County Community Action Agency has long become known for etching out a pathway to success for the disadvantaged.
Courtesy Photo/AACCAA

Remarkably, the agency's work and efficiency increased during the pandemic, and Dr. Fairley credited the forward-thinking and immediate action the agency took at the start of the pandemic.

"We are operating as a brand new agency," she stated, jokingly adding that the agency may consider always working remotely.

"We need to be in the office so we can meet our clients face-to-face," Dr. Fairley exclaimed. "We miss that. [But] we do have the means to receive applications and talk to our clients on Zoom and the telephone. But, in terms of work and meeting their needs, we are

fully equipped to do that remotely."

The agency has received numerous awards and citations from local, state, and federal officials for its anniversary.

Each noting how the agency has helped so many change lives.

For instance, those participating in the agency's workshops for first-time homebuyers work one-on-one with counselors who help them achieve their goals.

The agency's website provides an example of a single woman with grown children who recently contacted a counselor about finding a home and utilizing a down payment from the Maryland Mortgage Program.

The woman lived in subsidized housing paying \$1,300 monthly in rent. She attended one of the agency's workshops, and within two months, her credit score improved enough to qualify for a mortgage.

Late last summer, an Early Head Start family of four was diagnosed with COVID. Agency staff shopped for the family and provided necessary supplies during their quarantine.

"We are getting a lot of support at this time because people are aware there is a great need," Dr. Fairley said. "The pandemic really did shine a light on the needs in our state, and government at each level has been efficient in trying to meet those needs. We've had an infusion of funds from every level. We've had enough funds during the pandemic to meet our clients' needs and there's been an abundance. During this period, we've not turned away anyone."

Dr. Fairley, who once served as dean of Sojourner-Douglass College says that she is proud of the relationship she has always enjoyed with the community action agency.

"I've always worked in the community and always had a relationship with the agency," Dr. Fairley said. "[At Sojourner-Douglass], we provided space for the agency to conduct workshops. We trained all of the [Head-Start] teachers in the tri-county area. When I was hired, I said it would be for six months, but some of the agency staff started advocating for me and told the board they didn't need to look for anyone else. I won't be here [55 years from now], but we've done great work."

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New Film draws attention to significance of identifying “unmarked” graves of enslaved people

By Andrea Blackstone

In recent years, interest in locating burial grounds of enslaved people has grown. There is even a project called The National Burial Database of Enslaved Americans (NBDEA), which Slaveryremembrance.org describes as “the first and only national database to document individual burials and burial grounds of enslaved Americans.” However, for actor, writer, filmmaker and director of the Study of the Legacy of Slavery in Maryland, Chris Haley, delving into Black history has nearly been a lifelong calling. His grandmother, Zeona Haley, sparked his interest in the topic when she gave him a book called “A Pictorial History of the Negro in America.” It piqued his curiosity, when he realized many were included beyond the most commonly known names.

“I thought, ‘Oh my God, there’s all these black people who were a part of history. That’s amazing!’ And that started me being interested in Black history of other African Americans. Subsequent to that I became interested in genealogy, because my uncle is Alex Haley,” Chris said, recalling how his uncle’s research sparked interest about his mother’s side.

Then, nearly early 30 years ago, Chris became interested in visiting places where his mother’s ancestors were buried in Georgia. He remarked that looking at the places where they were laid to rest brought them back to life, in a way.

Collective personal interests later led to Chris’s co-production of a new film called “Unmarked,” which draws attention to unmarked cemeteries or unmarked final resting places, of free and formerly enslaved African Americans. In a similar way to his maternal lineage, Chris says that locating the graves, and creating the film, helps bring people who were overlooked, back to life. Preserving the areas helps to reinforce valuing the fact that they lived, mattered and are no longer forgotten.

“The idea behind it is to try to make known the situation where so many persons of African descent are buried across the United States of America, and

in underground places, where we have no idea where they are,” Chris said.

He further explains the reason why some graves are unmarked in the first place. He revealed that sometimes cemeteries have had no one to take care of the properties due to a lack of financial resources. Another reason was due to when people were buried during slavery, there wasn’t enough money or the wherewithal from people on the farms or plantations to acquire a stone, a tablet, or a memorial of any type, to mark their final resting place for perpetuity. Situations like these led to only having a stone, which happened to be in the area as a marker. A tree, a stump or a mound of earth was also used as a physical landmark for people who were enslaved on a plantation. There was awareness that people were buried in a field, but the exact location was not necessarily known.

Chris, who is also the executive director of the Utopia Film Festival in Greenbelt, Maryland, teamed up with Brad J. Bennett to bring the film project to fruition. Based in Central Virginia, Bennett is the co-director and producer of “Unmarked.”

Bennett says that he has always had a reverence for American History and those who came before him. Hearing something on the radio captured his interest.

“I first heard a piece on local public radio about a segregated cemetery in Richmond [Virginia] where descendants just a decade earlier couldn’t drive through a labyrinth of overgrown brush just to visit their family members laid to rest. We quickly got in touch with some of the descendants and volunteers leading [to] the preservation efforts at that particular cemetery,” Bennet said. “Knowing there were folks in the African American (free or enslaved) community who contributed largely to our society and whose gravesites were neglected and almost lost entirely was very concerning. I immediately knew this was a significant yet hidden issue that needed to be exposed.”

For directors Haley and Bennett, making “Unmarked” took three and half years to complete, primarily due to lack of funding. Bennett explained that the



Chris Haley and Brad J. Bennett co-directed a documentary about the historical significance, and preservation efforts of Southern gravesites and burial grounds of enslaved African-American called “Unmarked.” Chris Haley, the nephew of Alex Haley, has been interested in the burial places of ancestors for decades. Brad Bennett has had a reverence for American History and those who came before him. Filming the movie took place at Belvoir Plantation in Maryland plus locations in Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama. Mwita Chacha and Austin Journey were also a part of the documentary’s crew. A limited amount of DVDs will be released. On April 27, 2021, the 40-minute film will be available for rental and purchase from iTunes, Amazon, and AppleTV. The film will be shown at the Annapolis Festival until April 18, 2021.

Courtesy Photo



documentary film was a collective effort— many talented individuals freely gave their time and gifts.

On April 27, 2021, viewers can begin renting or purchasing the 40-minute film on iTunes, Amazon and AppleTV.

“Unmarked” has screened virtually at

several film festivals, including the Pan African Film Festival. It is being shown at the Annapolis Festival, until April 18, 2021.

To learn more about the film, visit <https://www.unmarkedfilm.com/>.



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Western High School 175th Anniversary ‘Shine the Light’ Gala Honors a Bright Past, Present and Future

By Luwanda Jenkins, V. P./Founding Member, Western High School Foundation

Western High School Foundation will present Western High School’s 175th Anniversary “Shine the Light” Gala on Thursday April 29, 2021 at 7:00 p.m to honor America’s oldest all-girl public high school and its shining legacy which has inspired women since 1844. The celebration will uplift the spirit of equity and unity embodied by Western today and throughout its history— notable graduates, bold alumnae, current school leaders, faculty and young women. Admission is free. To sign up for the event, please visit westernhighcelebration.com and simply click the register button.

Western officially commemorated its 175th anniversary on November 1, 2019 and planned a festive celebration in 2020. The pandemic necessitated revamping the event entirely. Even though the school reached its 176th year last fall and is celebrating virtually, the event is generating more excitement and can now reach alums and advocates across the nation.

Headlining the “Shine the Light” virtual party is award-winning actress, playwright, director and scholar, Anna Deavere Smith (WHS 19). The event will showcase a piece from her acclaimed Broadway show “Notes from the Field” and her candid conversation with current Western students about their lives, challenges and dreams.

Baltimoreans are proud of Smith’s local roots and worldwide achievement. She founded and directs the Institute of the Arts and Civic Dialogue at New York University, is a MacArthur “genius” fellow and was presented the National Humanities Medal by President Obama. Her television roles on “The West Wing,” “Nurse Jackie” and “Blackish” “have added to her national visibility.

Admission is free to provide inclusive uplift to everyone, including all city students and their families, alumnae near and far. The event will provide many opportunities to make donations to support and advance Western girls now



Dr. Carla Hayden, Shine the Light Special Guest, 14th Librarian of Congress. She says she is proud to live in a city with a fine school such as Western developing young women leaders.

Courtesy Photos

and in the future. Christine McKee WHS 1974 and Lee Kappelman WHS 1972 are the Gala co-chairs, and they promise an entertaining evening of song, drama, art and inspiration.

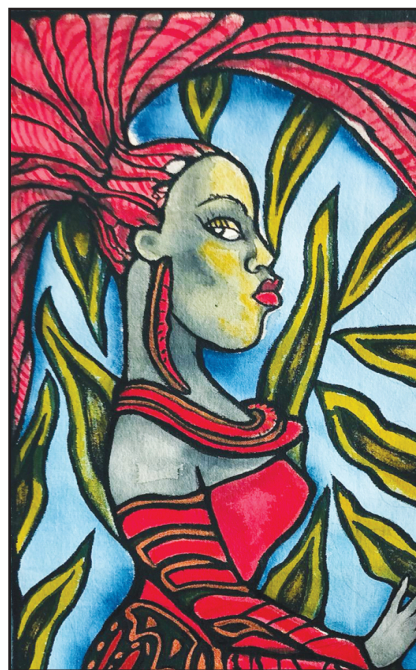
“Shine the Light” will begin with Principal Michelle White who will introduce the evening’s other leading ladies. She is honored to welcome Gala Honorary Co-chair, Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick, long-serving state superintendent of schools and current scholar in residence at Towson University, and very special guest Dr. Carla Hayden, the nation’s first African American and first woman to serve as Librarian of Congress and beloved former head of Enoch Pratt Free Library.

The extraordinary artist, Espi Frazier will be interviewed and show her 35 x 15 inch Red Queen Wall Hanging to be auctioned the week prior and the evening of the event. As well Frazier’s one of a kind vivid crochet shawl will be raffled via the celebration website. All proceeds benefit the Western High School Foundation’s initiatives to advance the academics and distinctions of the school and are tax-deductible.

Other event components include a mocktail/cocktail demonstration by beloved Downtown Kevin Brown, co-owner of Station North Arts Café, and Baltimore’s fabulous fashionista Capreze



Dr. Nancy Grasmick, former Maryland State Superintendent of Schools



Espi Frazier’s 35 x 15 inch Red Queen Wall Hanging will be auctioned the week prior and the evening of the event.

Jackson — both dressed “Bridgerton” style. Registrants who donate \$175 or more can receive a thank you gift of party tote bags including fun-enhancing surprises – loaded with delectable goodies, commemorative flutes and candles, selfie-wear, party jewelry, Octavia gift certificates, recipes and song lyrics.

The true stars of the evening will be current Western students who, under difficult covid conditions, will sing three



Luwanda Jenkins, Western alum, Senior Government Relations Associate of Bellamy Genn Group and Vice President of the new Western High School Foundation, Inc. She was the key driver in establishing the Foundation to keep Western’s legacy bright.

touching songs beloved by alumnae. Their performance was pre-recorded with individual solos which will be mixed for a chorus effect. Attendees are invited to sing along at home.

Why Western, why now? It’s not only to do with our anniversary and our legacy. It is about our entire nation right now, reckoning with issues of racial, gender and economic equity. These challenges plus the reality of poverty experienced by over half of Western’s students are our “why.” Western High School represents justice in action, on a daily basis, nurturing young women to achieve their individual bests. Western High School Foundation is determined to support growing excellence for the school and its determined, enthusiastic students.

Western’s motto “We receive light, let us give light” is more important today than in 1844. Western High School is the right place, at the right time to focus our attention and resources. We hope you will come April 29th to hear our girls’ stories, learn about Western High School’s brightening future ahead, and have a wonderful time! Bring your friends and family!

For information, please visit westernhighcelebration.com

Former Baltimore Teacher Inspires Students with Rita's Ice Franchise

By Stacy M. Brown

Former high school algebra teacher Albert Holley and his wife, Dr. Melissa Holley, are proud Rita's Italian Ice Shops franchise owners.

The couple owns and operates three area Rita's Ice, which boasts that it delivers the best cool treats.

After a dozen years as a teacher and a high school basketball coach where he passionately educated Baltimore's next-generation, Albert Holley uses his entrepreneurial traits to continue helping young people.

"Most of your workers in Rita's are going to be teens, high school, and college students," Holley remarked. "So, it is another opportunity for me to train young people and give them the tools and skills that they need."

The former teacher said young students—particularly those of color—can benefit a great deal by starting to work part-time at an early age. He noted the subtle difference between what he can teach in the store instead of what he taught in the classroom.

"In the workplace, it's about work ethic and how to be accountable," Holley said. "A couple of my stores are in underemployed areas, and I have 25 young people who work for me, so it is another way to provide jobs for these kids.

"This is valuable because for a lot of these young people, it is their first job, their first experience in the workplace, so they are learning.

"As they move forward, a foundation is being laid on how to work with others, how to take instructions. In the workplace, [if] you do not do your job;

you get fired. It is not the classroom where you can always come regardless of how you perform. Here in the workplace, you must be able to perform, learn your job, and do it at a high level to stay employed."

Holley and his wife often visited Rita's locations in Maryland with their two children.

Near the end of 2016, the couple purchased their first Rita's franchise in the Windsor Mill area. A year later, they opened their second location, and now they have expanded to three, including at the Inner Harbor.

Holley said his goal always was to become an entrepreneur, even though he taught for years.

"I kind of fell into teaching because a neighbor was a principal who told me I'd make a great teacher," Holley said.

So, when the opportunity arrived, Holley grabbed the chance to pursue his dream.

He has maintained the same passion for educating Baltimore's youth and said he knew his leap into the business world would provide more opportunities for him to impart real-world experiences to young people.

"I've always wanted to be an entrepreneur. I also fell in love with the concept of helping young people," Holley remarked. "I have coached young ones and won a couple of state [basketball] championships. But I looked at having financial security while also helping others.

"You have your dream and visions that you continue to pursue. Even in teaching and coaching, you have a long-term goal and vision for yourself."

Holley added that he hopes his journey



Former high school algebra teacher Albert Holley and his wife, Dr. Melissa Holley own and operate three area Rita's Ice franchises. Courtesy Photo

inspires others, particularly the young.

"The advice or message I've always given children is to dream and don't be afraid to dream," Holley noted. "There is a difference between dreaming and fantasizing, but dream big and see where

you want to be. You are never too young or too old to push your vision out there and to pursue it. It can happen. It happened to me. Life will take you on a journey. You just gotta' believe."

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New York— There are some great benefits to giving the gift of life insurance! It may not be on a typical “gift-giving” list, but when used correctly, it can be the gift that actually continues to give. People buy life insurance for many different reasons, but most often it is to protect the ones you love from financial burden.

“Some people wait for a major life event to buy life insurance — such as getting married, buying a home, starting a family or getting a raise at your job,” says Tim Heslin, Interim Head of AIG Life US. “Planning for your family’s future is an important one, and the amount of life insurance you may need can increase or decrease with all the different changes in your life.”

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Popular Choice: Terrace Marshall to Ravens in first round

By Tyler Hamilton

With the 2021 NFL Draft less than two weeks away, the Baltimore Ravens appear more and more likely to take a wide receiver with the 27th pick. LSU wide receiver Jamar Chase is the consensus top player at the position and will be long gone by the time the Ravens pick in the first round. However, his teammate Terrace Marshall is a pretty sweet consolation prize and should be there for the Ravens' taking.

ESPN NFL Draft analyst Mel Kiper Jr. has Baltimore taking Marshall in his latest mock draft.

As I wrote in my Mock Draft 3.0, quarterback Lamar Jackson needs an outside wide receiver that can run every route. That's Marshall, and it's rare that a team is able to find a guy like him this late in Round 1.

That just shows how exceptional and deep the current wideout class is going to be.

Marshall fits— even with Sammy Watkins joining Baltimore in a one-year deal.

With Matthew Judon and Yannick Ngakoue both gone in free agency, I also thought about Penn State edge defender Jayson Oweh, who has big-time upside. Judging from social media, Ravens fans seem to embrace Marshall as the suggested draft selection.

Marshall caught 48 passes for 731 yards and 10 touchdowns in seven games last season. His breakout season came in 2019 when he hauled in 46



It appears more and more likely that Baltimore Ravens will take a wide receiver with the 27th pick in the 2021 NFL Draft. The popular choice appears to be LSU's Terrace Marshall. NFL.com draft analyst Lance Zierlein compared Marshall to former Washington Football Team wide receiver Josh Doctson.

Photo Credit: Chris Parent/LSU Athletics

receptions for 671 yards and 13 touchdowns to contribute to LSU's National Championship season.

Marshall checked in at 6-foot-3, 205 pounds at LSU's pro day last month. His size alone is impressive. But when you factor on his 4.38-second time in the 40-yard dash and 39-inch vertical, it's no wonder Marshall is starting to get some buzz in the draft world.

Pro Football Focus has Marshall ranked as the No. 26 prospect while The Draft Network has him at No. 25 overall.

NFL.com draft analyst Lance Zierlein

compared Marshall to former Washington Football Team wide receiver Josh Doctson. Zierlein predicts Marshall will be a starter within the next two seasons.

Big, fast and talented, Marshall has

the ingredients to become a solid starter in the league but has some questions to answer. With the departure of Justin Jefferson and with Ja'Marr Chase opting out, more targets and more shaded coverage ended up coming his way until he opted out at the end of November.

He looks much more comfortable outside than he does in the slot, and he's a more reliable ball-catcher when he's working the second and third levels. He's a natural ball-tracker with a second gear and the catch radius to go get it, and his size gives him an advantage on 50-50 balls.

For all of his talent, Marshall seemed disinterested at times in 2020 and wasn't always committed to finishing his routes or running them with consistent intensity. There are traits and talent at his disposal, but the difference between becoming a WR2 and a WR3/4 could be determined by how hard he is willing to work at his craft.

The Ravens have already added Sammy Watkins to the group of receivers. That may not be enough. Baltimore is lacking a big body wideout that can win on the outside. Marshall fits that description perfectly.

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Black Real Estate Agent Program launched to support aspiring Black agents

Program is the first of its kind, providing financial, educational, and career support for aspiring Black real estate agents to help them achieve high-production success

San Francisco, CA— HomeLight, the real estate technology platform that empowers people to achieve better outcomes when buying or selling their home, announced the launch of the Black Real Estate Agent Program in partnership with the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB), the largest and oldest minority professional real estate trade association in the United States. The HomeLight-NAREB Black Real Estate Agent Program — the first program of its kind in the United States — will provide financial, educational, and career support for aspiring Black real estate agents across the country, helping them achieve high-production success.

According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data, Black Americans represent less than 6 percent of all real estate professionals. The HomeLight-NAREB Black Real Estate Agent Program will seek to increase the number of top-producing Black agents in real estate, with the ultimate goal of helping improve the rate of homeownership for Black Americans across the country. As part of the program, HomeLight and NAREB will help cover many of the onboarding costs for new agents up to \$5,000, including pre-licensing classes, agent exams, and select marketing and technology needs. Each program participant will be paired with an experienced NAREB Realtist who will serve as a mentor and advisor.



The HomeLight-NAREB Black Real Estate Agent Program— the first program of its kind in the United States — will provide financial, educational, and career support for aspiring Black real estate agents across the country, helping them achieve high-production success.
Photo Credit: ClipArt.com

Participants will also receive ongoing training and education above and beyond that which brokers typically provide. “Our goal is to drive sustainable, structural change by increasing access to job opportunities as well as education around how systematic racism has impacted the real estate industry,” said Sumant Sridharan, Chief Operating Officer at HomeLight. “We’re excited to partner with NAREB to offer this program to aspiring Black real estate professionals. Together, we believe we can fundamentally shift diversity and equality in our industry by increasing access to training, education, and support for Black real estate agents.”

“NAREB applauds and welcomes the partnership with HomeLight. Our association’s goal to achieve Democracy in Housing cannot be reached without the increase in the ranks of Black real estate professionals. Agents are the frontline and introduce homeownership to prospective clients. We are confident that this new program will not only equip Black American program participants with the knowledge and practical experience to become top producers in their communities but also

significantly expand Black homeownership in their communities,” said Lydia Pope, President-Elect at NAREB.

Applications are open immediately. HomeLight and NAREB are actively seeking aspiring Black real estate professionals who are:

- Between the ages of 18 and 35
- Interested in a career in real estate, but not currently established as an agent
- Willing to work with a NAREB broker during at least their first year in real estate
- Committed to spending five to ten hours per week working with mentors or on continuing education
- Located anywhere in the United States

“In the aftermath of the racially stoked unrest in 2020, NAREB and HomeLight formed a working partnership to increase the number of Black Americans in the real estate profession. This initiative works to close the income and racial wealth gap in the industry. As important, our efforts are designed to increase Black homeownership. Together, we’re holding open the door that would otherwise remain closed to Black professionals and consumers,” said Antoine Thompson, National Executive Director for NAREB.

For more information and to sign up, visit the Black Real Estate Agent Program.

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