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St. James Episcopal Church, an Iconic Baltimore Pillar, Celebrates Bicentennial



The Right Reverend Carrie Schofield-Broadbent (center), bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, served as a co-presiding celebrant of St. James Episcopal Church's 200th Anniversary Jubilee Mass; to the left of Schofield-Broadbent is The Reverend Melvin E. Truitt of St. James; and to the left of Truitt is The Reverend Michael Bruce Curry, the presiding bishop and primate of The Episcopal Church, who was the guest preacher. (See article on page 8)

Photo credit: Gar Roberts

Top 5 Things to Consider Before Buying a Home

Sponsored by JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Homeownership has long been a reliable and valuable investment for many Americans. The Black homeownership rate in the U.S., however, stands at just 44% — the lowest among all racial groups according to the National Association of Realtors.

A lack of access to credit, a lack of understanding about the homebuying process, and coming up with the upfront cash needed for a down payment and closing costs are among the barriers many Black Americans face on their journey to homeownership. That's why it's important to consider your options and seek out resources to help navigate the homebuying process.

For National Homeownership Month, Justin Cotton, Chase Home Lending Advisor shared five important things to consider before purchasing a home.

Come prepared and don't stress about rates.

The best time to buy a home is when you're financially ready. Worry less about the current economic environment and more about your own preparedness for homeownership, including fully knowing and understanding your financial situation, debt level, credit score, savings and investment positions.

Save for a down payment.

A down payment is what you pay upfront toward the cost of your new home; it's the difference between your mortgage amount and your purchase price. The more you can put down, the less you'll be borrowing from a lender. However, it is a myth that you must put down 20% of the purchase price—low



Justin Cotton
JPMorgan Chase & Co.

down payment loan options are available—in some cases, as low as 3%. Keep in mind that if you put less than 20% down, you may be required to pay private mortgage insurance. Make sure to speak to a Chase Home Lending Advisor to understand the options that may work for you.

Evaluate loan options and shop around.

There are many different types of home loans available, and having an experienced Chase Home Lending Advisor on your side can help you make the right decision for you. Here are the most common types of loans:

- A **conventional loan** typically calls for a higher credit score to qualify and can be accessed through private lenders, including banks, credit unions, and mortgage companies.
- An **FHA loan** is backed by the federal government. These loans can help potential buyers with lower credit scores who wish to keep their down payment costs low. Buyers using an FHA loan are required to pay monthly mortgage insurance premiums, regardless of the down payment amount.
- A **VA loan** is a mortgage the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs offers to servicemembers, veterans and surviving spouses. VA loans can have favorable terms, including no down payment.
- Your **financial institution** may also offer additional loan options. An example is Chase's DreaMaker mortgage, which has flexible credit guidelines and requires as little as 3% down.

Lastly, no matter the loan type you chose, it's important to shop around for the best offer, both in terms of rate and other fees you may have to pay.



Photo: Pexels

All lenders and mortgages are not the same. For instance, did you know that, on average, homebuyers save more in mortgage fees with a bank like Chase, compared to a non-bank?

Use tools to help.

It's important to look into the financial resources available to help you purchase a home. Chase offers a homebuyer grant of up to \$7,500 to buyers purchasing homes in eligible areas. These grants are offered in low- to moderate-income communities and neighborhoods that are designated by the U.S. Census as majority-Black, Hispanic and/or Latino. The grant can be used to lower the interest rate and/or reduce closing costs or down payment. You can check grant eligibility online with the Chase Homebuyer Assistance Finder and also discover other financial assistance that may be available.

For added confidence during the closing process, Chase also offers a Closing Guarantee, which promises an on-time closing for eligible customers in as soon as three weeks, or the customer

will receive \$20,000 (for a limited time through July 27, 2024) if they qualify. The closing guarantee helps buyers close quickly, which can be very helpful in a competitive market.

Get educated.

Buying a home can be the achievement of a lifetime, but being able to sustain homeownership over time is equally, if not even more, important. For the best chances of success, homebuyers should not only get educated about the buying process, but also understand the ins and outs of homeownership after the home is purchased. Chase's Beginner to Buyer podcast and its Homebuyer Education Center offers tips and first-hand experiences on homebuying, selling, and ownership.

Homeownership offers many benefits beyond just a place to live — it's a time-tested way to start building personal and generational wealth. That's why it's never too early to start working toward your dreams of homeownership. After all, it's an investment in your future.

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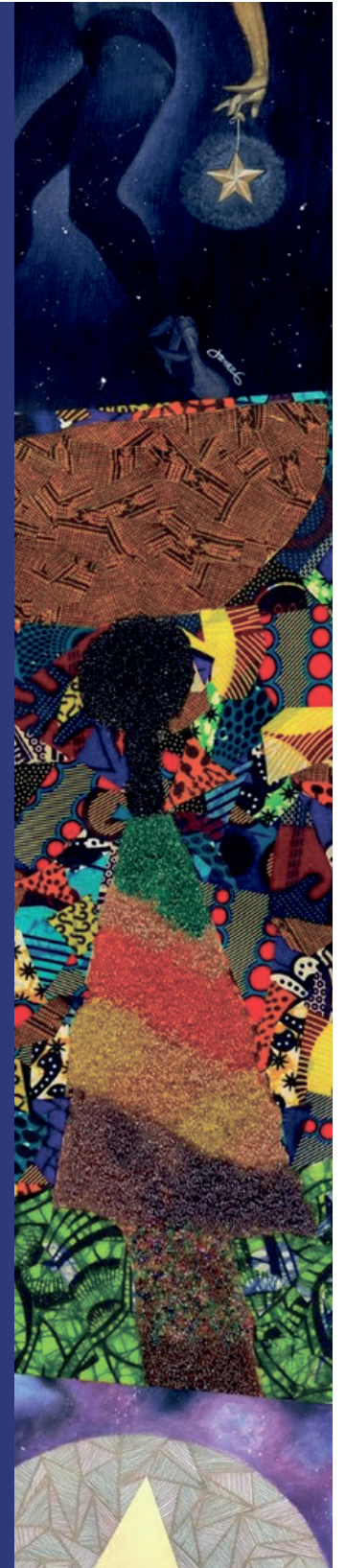
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Not-So-Social Engineering: Twenty Ways to Get “Got”

By Karen Clay

Clay Technology and Multimedia, L.L.C.

Most of us are social beings. We enjoy connecting with and helping each other. We engage in social traditions to solidify our connections to each other. It’s no surprise then that cyber criminals use this to exploit our inclination to trust, our willingness to assist, and our need to belong. This fundamental aspect of our nature is what makes social engineering so effective. Our social behaviors can sometimes lead us into traps set by bad actors so understanding this vulnerability is crucial to helping us recognize when our social instincts are being manipulated for nefarious purposes. Knowledge is powerful, so here are 15 ways in which bad actors attempt to use our social nature to gain access to our personal, financial and other data and ways to mitigate the attempts. When armed with this information, we can be empowered to take the necessary steps to protect ourselves and still engage positively with the world around us.

Whaling: Phishing attacks that target high profile individuals like executives or wealthy individuals. **Purpose:** To gain access to valuable information or high value assets. **Avoidance:** Train high-level executives and other key personnel to recognize phishing attempts and implement robust email filtering and authentication protocols.

Pretexting: Creating a fabricated scenario to obtain private information from an individual. **Purpose:** To gather information for further attacks or to gain unauthorized access to systems. **Avoidance:** Always verify the identity of the person requesting information, especially if the request is unusual or sensitive. Use established communication channels.

Baiting: Leaving a physical device, such as a USB drive, in a location where it will be found and used by someone. **Purpose:** To install malware or gain access to a network. **Avoidance:** Do not insert unknown USB drives or download files from untrusted sources. Use antivirus software to scan any new devices.

Quid Pro: Offering a service or benefit in exchange for information or access. **Purpose:** To exploit individuals’ desire for help or services. **Avoidance:** Be skeptical of unsolicited offers of help or services, especially if they require access to your personal information or systems.

Piggybacking: Convincing someone to allow you to follow them into a restricted area, often by pretending to have forgotten your access card. **Purpose:** To gain unauthorized entry to secure areas. **Avoidance:** Never allow someone to enter a secure area with you unless you can verify their identity and authorization.

Impersonation: Pretending to be someone else to gain access to information or systems. **Purpose:** To trick individuals into divulging sensitive information or granting access. **Avoidance:** Verify the identity of anyone requesting sensitive information or access, particularly through unexpected or unofficial channels.

Shoulder Surfing: Observing someone entering sensitive information, such as a PIN or password. **Purpose:** To steal login credentials or other sensitive information. **Avoidance:** Be mindful of your surroundings when entering sensitive information. Use privacy screens on devices and avoid entering passwords in public places.

Social Media Mining: Collecting information from social media profiles to use in social engineering attacks.



Take steps to protect your data. Graphic Design by Karen Clay

Purpose: To gather personal details that can be used for targeted attacks. **Avoidance:** Limit the amount of personal information you share on social media. Adjust privacy settings to restrict access to your posts and profiles.

Honey Trap: Using romantic or sexual lures to manipulate individuals into revealing sensitive information. **Purpose:** To exploit personal relationships for access to information. **Avoidance:** Be cautious about forming online relationships, especially with individuals who request personal information or favors early on.

Reverse Social Engineering: Creating a problem and then offering a solution, making the target seek out the attacker for help. **Purpose:** To gain the target’s trust and obtain sensitive information. **Avoidance:** Verify the legitimacy of any unsolicited offers of help. Contact the supposed helper through official channels before providing any information.

Evil Twin Attack: Setting up a rogue Wi-Fi network that appears to be legitimate to intercept data from users who connect to it. **Purpose:** To steal sensitive information such as login credentials or financial information. **Avoidance:** Avoid connecting to public Wi-Fi networks, especially those without passwords. Use a VPN when accessing the internet from public places.

Scareware: Using alarming messages to scare users into thinking their system is infected with malware, prompting them to take immediate action. **Purpose:** To trick users into installing malware or paying for fake security services. **Avoidance:** Do not trust unsolicited security alerts. Use reputable antivirus software and run regular scans on your system.

Understanding these tactics and implementing the associated preventive measures will enable you to significantly reduce the risk of falling victim to them.

National News

Governor Moore Signs Nationally Historic Executive Order Pardoning 175,000 Maryland Cannabis Convictions

ANNAPOLIS, MD (June 17, 2024)

— Governor Wes Moore signed a historic executive order on June 17, 2024 pardoning 175,000 Maryland convictions related to the possession of cannabis, including convictions for misdemeanor possession of cannabis and certain convictions for misdemeanor possession of drug paraphernalia. The order represents the largest pardon for misdemeanor cannabis possession charges for any state in the country and the inclusion of paraphernalia makes Maryland the first state to take such action.

“Maryland made history when we legalized cannabis by referendum. But we cannot celebrate the benefits of legalization while forgetting the consequences of criminalization. No Marylander should face barriers to housing, employment, or education based on convictions for conduct that is no longer illegal,” said Gov. Moore. “Today, we take a big step forward toward ensuring equal justice for all. But this won’t be our last effort. We must continue to move in partnership to build a state and society that is more equitable, more just, and leaves no one behind.

The governor’s pardon follows the constitutional amendment passed during Maryland’s 2022 legislative session that legalized adult use and possession of cannabis and was overwhelmingly approved by popular referendum. Of the 175,000 pardons issued, more than 150,000 represent misdemeanor convictions for simple cannabis possession and more than 18,000 represent misdemeanor convictions for use or possession with intent to use drug paraphernalia.

Eligibility criteria for the pardons include:

- Convictions for misdemeanor possession of cannabis or misdemeanor use or possession with intent to use drug paraphernalia;



Governor Wes Moore holds the signed executive order that pardons 175,000 cannabis convictions. Photo: Courtesy of Office of the Governor

- Convictions for misdemeanor use or possession with intent to use drug paraphernalia were in cases associated with misdemeanor cannabis possession and no other charges were incurred;
- Related disposition of guilty or probation before judgment;
- Charges occurring prior to January 1, 2023, when possession of personal use amount of cannabis was decriminalized.

“The enforcement of cannabis laws has disproportionately and overwhelmingly burdened communities of color. Opportunities were denied because those who were convicted faced steep obstacles to jobs, education, and housing,” said Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown. “Governor Moore’s pardons will remove these barriers and enable thousands of Marylanders to lead productive lives

without the impediments created by their prior convictions. I thank Governor Moore for his bold and decisive action in the name of fairness and equity.”

As a result of the executive order, the Maryland Judiciary will ensure that each individual’s electronic docket is updated with an entry indicating that the conviction has been pardoned by the governor. The process is expected to take approximately two weeks.

Governor Moore’s executive order also directs the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to develop a process to indicate on an individual’s criminal record that the conviction was pardoned. This process is expected to take approximately 10 months to complete.

See **PARDONS**, page 11

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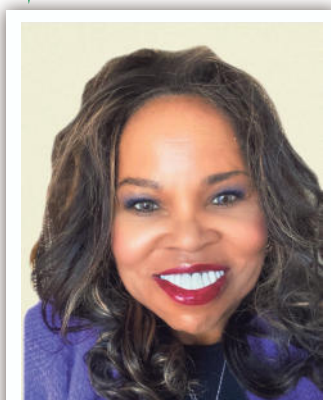
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Jayne Hopson
Courtesy Photo

By Jayne Hopson

Introduction

In the world of African American media, Black newspaper publishers hold a pivotal role in disseminating information, shaping public opinion, and fostering community engagement. However, the alarmingly high rates of illiteracy within the Black community present a significant challenge to poor or non-readers.

Explore why Black newspaper publishers should be deeply concerned about high illiteracy rates and how it impacts circulation, readership, and overall mission.

Demographics of Black Newspaper Readership

Black newspapers reach a substantial audience, with a total readership of 22 million per week. This demographic primarily consists of African Americans aged 25-35, with a median income of \$35,500 to \$45,000. These statistics underscore a vibrant and potentially influential readership base. However, the effectiveness of Black newspapers hinges on the literacy levels of their audience.

The Illiteracy Crisis

Illiteracy is a pervasive issue in the United States, with 45 million Americans unable to read above a fifth-grade level and 50% of adults unable to comprehend an eighth-grade-level book.

Why Black Newspaper Publishers Must Address the Literacy Needs of “Readers” Who Cannot Read

Among African Americans, the situation is even more dire:

- Two-thirds of fourth graders fail to achieve proficient reading levels.
- 85% of juvenile offenders struggle with reading.
- Three out of five Black individuals in American prisons are illiterate.
- Three out of four Black people on welfare cannot read.
- These statistics reveal a literacy crisis that severely affects the Black community, with far-reaching implications for black newspaper publishers.

Impact on Circulation and Readership

Diminished Readership: High illiteracy rates directly affect the number of potential readers. If a significant portion of the African American community struggles with reading, the pool of individuals who can engage with newspaper content shrinks, leading to lower circulation figures.

Limited Engagement: Newspapers rely on reader engagement, not just passive readership. Illiterate individuals are unable to participate in community discussions, understand complex issues, or contribute to the dialogue that newspapers aim to foster. This reduces the overall impact of the content provided.

Economic Viability: For newspapers, advertising revenue is closely linked to circulation numbers. Lower readership due to illiteracy can lead to decreased ad revenue, affecting the financial sustainability of Black newspapers. This, in turn, can limit their ability to invest in quality journalism and community outreach.

Broader Social Implications

Community Empowerment:

Newspapers play a crucial role in empowering communities through information. High illiteracy rates hinder the dissemination of important news, health information, educational resources, and civic engagement opportunities. This perpetuates cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement.

Youth Education: Black newspapers often serve as a resource for young readers and students. The high rates of illiteracy among fourth graders and the lack of basic reading skills in schools point to a systemic issue. By addressing illiteracy, newspapers can help foster a more informed and educated youth, ensuring a brighter future for the community.

Crime and Rehabilitation: The correlation between illiteracy and crime is stark, with 85% of juvenile offenders and a significant portion of prison populations being unable to read. Black newspapers can be instrumental in advocating for educational programs within the criminal justice system, promoting rehabilitation through literacy.

Strategic Responses

•**Literacy Initiatives:** Black newspaper publishers can collaborate with community organizations to launch literacy programs aimed at various age groups. These initiatives can include reading clubs, adult education classes, and partnerships with schools to improve reading skills.

•**Accessible Content:** Publishers can create content that is accessible to those with lower literacy levels while still maintaining the integrity of the



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information. Simplified language, visual aids, and multimedia content can help bridge the gap.

•**Advocacy and Awareness:** Newspapers have the platform to raise awareness about the illiteracy crisis and advocate for policy changes at local and national levels. By highlighting the issue, they can mobilize community action and support for educational reforms.

Summary

The high rate of illiteracy within the Black community is a critical issue that Black newspaper publishers cannot afford to ignore. It affects circulation, readership engagement, and economic viability while also having broader social implications. By addressing this challenge through literacy initiatives, accessible content, advocacy, and technology-driven support for poor or nonreaders, Black newspapers can continue to play a vital role in empowering and informing their communities.

Jayne Hopson, a 2024 Commonwealth Health Care Performance Fellow. The special series “Illiteracy: Black America’s Public Health Enemy # 1 is funded by the Association of Health Care Journalists (AHCJ) and supported by The Commonwealth Fund.

Black Doulas Make Pregnancy Safer, Fight to Improve Black Maternal Health Experiences

By Andrea Blackstone

Leah Hairston, a Baltimorean and founder of Sweet Bee Services, once pretended to feed a cabbage patch doll named Sonya when her mother fed her siblings. Her nurturing spirit increased and deepened. Hairston became interested in the doula profession when she was a middle school student. She recalls watching “A Birth Story” on TLC, but Black doulas were missing from birth stories she watched. After pursuing college at Howard University, and graduate school at Columbia University School of Social Work, Hairston answered the call to become a doula and launch a full-spectrum doula agency.

What is a doula?

Black doulas are rare, but they do exist. It has been reported that 10 percent of doulas in the nation are Black.

“The doula is a professional trained in childbirth who provides emotional, physical, and educational support to a mother who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth. Their purpose is to help women have a safe, memorable, and empowering birthing experience,” according to the American Pregnancy Association.

Hairston primarily operates her business in Maryland, DC, and Virginia. However, Sweet Bee Services has clients in eight different states. Childbirth education classes, lactation counselors, a registered dietician, a pelvic floor physical therapist, massage therapists and yoga instructors can be accessed through her business, in addition to doulas who can provide virtual and in-person support.

“We have a team of doulas who are certified birth and certified postpartum



Leah Hairston, MSSW provides services as a birth and postpartum doula. She is dedicated to educating and empowering women with female reproductive systems.

Photo: Kent J. Edwards

doulas,” Hairston said. “At Sweet Bee Services, we attend to both home birth and hospital births, as well as birth centers and anything in between.”

She explained how she worked to provide virtual support for out-of-state clients. After a due date was confirmed, she traveled to help them induce their labor naturally. Hairston worked with their midwives and doctors. After they gave birth, she stayed longer to provide postpartum support.

Why do some people use doulas?

The CDC reported that “Racial disparities persist. The risk of pregnancy-related deaths for black women is three to four times higher than those of white women.”

Doula care is not just for wealthy families or women of a certain ethnicity. Hairston stated that her company serves everyone. However, Sweet Bee Services started because of this sobering statistic.

She further explained, “Research has also shown that the first year after having a baby is the most dangerous for people, in terms of maternal mortality rates, so our clients look like everyone under the sun.”



Davida McPhee labors in a birthing pool during her home birth experience with her first child as doula Leah Hairston sits near her. Photo: Sarah Elizabeth

How do doulas help address Black womens' health outcomes?

Hairston said that one of the main statistical reasons that mothers are dying is because advocacy for their health is needed either during or shortly after childbirth. For example, if mothers are experiencing hemorrhaging or excessive bleeding, or if they have concerns connected to hypertensive disorders, their medical records may not have been fully understood by the providers to enable continuity of care to be given. Also, racialized perceptions around health care needs, and the stereotypical perception that Black people do not experience pain in the same manner as others, can become a factor.

When people do not feel comfortable speaking up because of power dynamics, they do always receive the care that they need immediately.

“And so, there’s a prolonged path before they actually receive necessary interventions,” Hairston explained.

As a doula, she helps her clients from the very beginning through the childbirth

education class. Hairston supports them in maintaining a sense of control and power.

What is the difference between a doula and a midwife?

Hairston stated that midwives are clinically trained healthcare providers. Doulas are not.

“Midwives’ jobs are to make sure that physically, people are safe during their pregnancy and during postpartum, as well as their birth experience.”

She added, “I explain it this way. Doctors are there when people are pushing. Nurses are typically there towards the end of the labor experience, or throughout labor and when they’re pushing. Doulas are there from the time people become pregnant, up until their babies are about a year old, depending on what support they need and the depth of the relationship that we’ve built together.”

A Rewarding Impact

Doulas like Hairston coach, teach, provide information, decrease the risk of traumatic experiences, and advocate with compassion.

“Everyone needs a doula like you! What you do is literally life-saving! We are so grateful for the information, emotional support, and care you gave our family,” said Davida McPhee, wife of retired Baltimore Ravens player, Pernell McPhee.

Visit <https://www.sweetbeedoula.com> to learn more about Hairston and Sweet Bee Services.

St. James Episcopal Church, an Iconic Baltimore Pillar, Celebrates Bicentennial

By **Demetrius Dillard**

In the early 19th century, an Episcopal deacon named William Levington took a courageous leap of faith, relocating from Philadelphia to Baltimore City to establish a church for free and enslaved Black people.

Through adversity, challenges and obstacles, the religious establishment founded by Levington is still standing and has emerged to become a historical fixture in the city and beyond.

St. James Episcopal Church, nestled in the heart of West Baltimore at the intersection of North Arlington and West Lafayette Avenues, is celebrating its 200th year.

“It speaks to longevity. There aren’t many institutions of any kind that can say they’re 200 years old,” said Helen Griffin Anderson, who serves as the senior warden at St. James.

“It was the members, and it was the leadership. Because of their commitment to God, to their faith, that’s why we’re still here. We’re still relevant.”

As senior warden, Anderson is a layperson with a leadership role within the parish. The St. Paul, Minnesota, native moved to Baltimore more than five decades ago.

She has been a member of St. James since 1970. From the moment Anderson stepped foot in the church, she knew it was a special place.

“When I came to St. James, it was clear to me this was a special place. I wasn’t exactly sure why, but I knew it was special,” said Anderson, who spent her career as an educator in the Baltimore City School system.

“As I continued to worship there, then it became revealed to me what made it special. When I began to hear about the history of the church, how it was established, when it was established

and how important it was in the city of Baltimore, it just kind of all came together for me, and I said ‘This is it. This is why this is such a special place.’”

Founded in 1824 – nearly 40 years prior to the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation – St. James was the first Black Episcopal congregation established south of the Mason-Dixon line.

The church is a vital institution and staple in the Greater Baltimore region. With sights set on a promising future, St. James’ parishioners and supporters strive to maintain its Episcopal roots alongside its African American heritage.

St. James has stood the test of time, and in some of the city’s most challenging periods, it was a place for people of all ages to gather, socialize, receive mentorship and build a sense of community. The religious structure was particularly special to thousands of West Baltimore residents.

Through its food distribution program, outreach efforts, summer enrichment program, Angel Tree project in collaboration with the Druid Hill YMCA, and St. James Academy in collaboration with Harlem Park Elementary, the church is doing its due diligence to empower local residents.

“We like to say that we are serving our community,” Anderson said.

“Could we do more? Absolutely, there’s always more work to be done. But we think we are doing God’s work, and that’s why we’re still here. We’re still standing 200 years later because we are serving God’s people through worship and through our community involvement.”

A number of legendary figures have either worshipped at St. James or have been honorary guests, including former Afro American Newspapers publisher Carl Murphy and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, among many others.



St James Episcopal Church
Photo: Jacob D. Howard, III



Dozens of congregants assembled for St. James Episcopal Church’s Jubilee Mass service on June 9, celebrating the church’s milestone 200th anniversary.
Photo: Gar Roberts



This historic piece of artwork, known as a sampler, was on display during Jubilee weekend at St. James. The church's founder, William Levington, created the piece in the early 1830s. Photo: Gar Roberts



The Reverend Michael Bruce Curry, the presiding bishop and primate of The Episcopal Church, was the guest preacher for St. James Episcopal Church's 200th anniversary Jubilee. From 1988 to 2000, he served as the rector of St. James. Photo: Laila Lowery

This year marks the church's Jubilee, which is a year-long celebration. Some events hosted so far by the church this year included a book discussion, concerts and special choir performances, and a festival.

During Jubilee weekend, there was a uniquely designed piece of artwork on display at the church – known as a sampler – that closely resembles what many would consider tapestry. The artwork was created by Levington in the early 1830s and holds sentimental value among St. James parishioners and supporters.

A banquet held June 7, 2024, followed by a Jubilee Mass gathering on June 9, were the highlighted events of St. James' 200th anniversary.

The Reverend Michael Curry, who now serves as the presiding bishop of

the Episcopal Church, was the rector of St. James from 1988 to 2000. He returned "home" and helped celebrate the Jubilee bicentennial as the guest preacher during Mass on June 9.

Curry was joined by The Reverend Raphael Warnock, who recently made history as the first Black American to represent Georgia in the Senate. The Right Reverend Carrie Schofield-Broadbent, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, served



A light pole banner sits above the West Baltimore intersection of North Arlington and West Lafayette Avenues, the location of St. James Episcopal Church. Photo: Gar Roberts

as a co-presiding celebrant.

Jubilee Mass was also a homecoming of sorts. Numerous individuals who once attended St. James returned to the church to support the bicentennial celebration.

More than 44 "sons" and "daughters" of St. James have become deacons, priests, canons and ministers in the Episcopal church and other protestant denominations. Others have become

professors in divinity schools, prolific biblical scholars and authors, and school chaplains.

Charles Cephas, a lifetime member of St. James, serves as the co-chair of the church's Jubilee committee.

"It speaks to our longevity," Cephas said of the church's 200th anniversary.

On the evening of June 7, St. James hosted its 200th Anniversary Jubilee Gala at Martin's West. The evening included dinner, live music and a program facilitated by WJZ-TV anchor Vic Carter, who was the master of ceremonies.

"It was just overwhelming, and just to have the presiding bishop [there] in attendance was just a wonderful, wonderful experience," Cephas said of the recent Jubilee events.

Voices of Experience: Organ Donation Advocates Strive to Save, Improve More Lives

By Andrea Blackstone

Registered organ donors can help save and improve lives, when vital organs, such as lungs or the heart fail in individuals with a grim prognosis.

Katja Fort Rhoden and Tim Heely both serve on Donate Life Maryland's (DLM) board. DLM, the state-authorized nonprofit organization, is responsible for managing the Maryland Donor Registry. Fort Rhoden and Heely were given more time to do good deeds and live well because of their generous organ donors.

Anyone can unexpectedly need help someday in the future. When community leaders publicly and bravely decide to share pieces of their personal health stories, the impact of organ, eye, and tissue donation becomes real.

Katja Fort Rhoden

Fort Rhoden, an organ donation advocate and Howard County, Maryland-based mother, received a double lung transplant in 2018.

"I realized the positive impact that had on my life. I wanted to pay it forward and to volunteer my time to advance awareness and dispel myths about organ donation," she said, explaining why she wanted to get involved with DLM.

After volunteering for DLM, Fort Rhoden was invited to serve on the board.

Organ donors of all ethnicities are needed. Fort Rhoden, who is biracial, explained that organ donation numbers in minority communities are lower. She also discovered that her son has the same rare disease that she does.

"While he is not listed for a



Katja Fort Rhoden, double lung transplant recipient and Donate Life Maryland board member.

Photo: Katja Fort Rhoden

transplant now, it's very likely that my son could need a transplant when he becomes an adult. So, my motivation is not just my own experience, but knowing that my son, who is a young Black male, will also need a transplant someday," she said.

Advocacy work and trying to heal the relationship between minorities and the medical community is extremely important, as well as dispelling myths about organ donation. Fort Rhoden reminded us that Black Americans hold a great deal of distrust for the medical system. Finding a match within your own community can become a life-or-death matter.

"I feel like the time that I have here on Earth, I just want to really pay it forward and make a positive impact. I don't know who my donor was, but I feel like I've tried to honor them every day," Fort Rhoden stated.



Tim Heely, retired U.S. Navy Rear Admiral, heart transplant recipient and Donate Life Maryland board member. Photo: Cherie Heely

Rear Admiral Tim Heely, U.S. Navy (ret.)

Tim Heely, a Saint Mary's County Maryland resident and retired Navy Admiral had a heart attack 13 years ago. He received a heart transplant 11 years ago. These days, the organ donor recipient feels "pretty good."

"I have been an organ donor since I was 16. I never thought I'd be the recipient of an organ, but it made sense to donate," Heely said. "Once, I did get the heart, I realized firsthand how important that was, and how important it was to get the information out [about organ donation]."

He mentioned that people sometimes worry about matters such as taking a piece of their body away after they die, or if that makes a difference if they go to Heaven.

"I just want to try to help tell people that if you do donate an organ that you no longer need, you're

saving at least a half a dozen, if not more lives of other people," Heely stated.

While giving speeches as a Navy retiree, Heely always mentions the importance of organ donation, because it saved his life and many others.

In Heely's case, receiving another heart allowed him to witness children getting married and the birth of grandchildren.

Although the donor's family did not choose to respond to a letter that he penned about the positive impact the organ donor made, Heely feels that he has a bond with his donor. He believes the donor was male.

"Every morning, I wake up and I think of my surgeons, my nurses, and my and the hospital staff...I don't miss a day without thanking everyone involved for giving me this life," Heely shared.

He stated that in his role as a DLM board member, he has testified a few times before the legislature in Annapolis, Maryland to try to get funding to spread the word about the importance of organ, eye, and tissue donation.

"We make it more human and get the emotional aspects of things that a professional can't," Heely said.

"I am grateful to my donor families, the professionals, God, and people that gave me the second chance," Heely said.

Please visit Donate Life Maryland via <https://www.donatelifemaryland.org/> to learn more about organ, eye, and tissue donation.

Pardons

Continued from page 5

“Last Prisoner Project applauds Governor Moore and his administration’s actions to rectify racial disparities caused by cannabis prohibition. Today’s historic pardon is the boldest measure undertaken by any governor and will finally provide a light at the end of the tunnel for people who are dealing with the collateral consequences of a record – inability to find housing, employment, education, or even insurance or financial products, based solely on a scarlet letter from their past,” said Last Prisoner Project Director of Strategic Initiatives Jason Ortiz. “By answering President Biden’s continued call on governors to grant cannabis clemency, Governor Moore has become a champion of cannabis justice that other governors can follow. All it takes is the stroke of a pen to right history.”



Governor Moore signed the executive order using the Last Prisoner Project’s “Pen to Right History,” a pen that family, friends, and loved ones of people impacted by cannabis incarceration all around the country have used to write letters to elected officials asking for justice.

Photo: Courtesy of Office of the Governor

Governor Moore signed the executive order using the Last Prisoner Project’s “Pen to Right History,” a pen that family, friends, and loved ones of people

impacted by cannabis incarceration all around the country have used to write letters to elected officials asking for justice. The pen is a powerful symbol to represent the real impact that legislation and executive action have to help rectify the wrongful imprisonment of victimless cannabis-related sentences. The governor’s pardon will not release any incarcerated individuals, but it is an important first step to ensuring the fair and equitable administration of justice surrounding cannabis convictions in Maryland.

Individuals do not need to take any action to receive the pardon. After the Judiciary updates the electronic dockets to reflect the pardon, a process that should take approximately two weeks, individuals can check online or at a public kiosk at any courthouse in the state to verify whether they were included in the pardon.

To review individual records, visit the Maryland Judiciary Case Search website: casesearch.courts.state.md.us/

[casesearch/](https://casesearch.courts.state.md.us/). To locate the nearest courthouse, visit mdcourts.gov/courtsdirectory/courtlocations.

Anyone who is eligible for a pardon but who was not included in the mass pardon may apply for a pardon through the regular application process—as may be the case for individuals whose convictions pre-date electronically available record formats. To apply for a pardon, visit dpscs.state.md.us/publicservs/pdfs/Application-for-Pardon-Revised.pdf.

A pardon is different from an expungement. Though the Maryland Judiciary will make a note on the record that the offense has been pardoned, it will still appear on the individual’s record. Expungement is the process by which a criminal conviction is destroyed and removed completely from the public record. Individuals who want to remove a conviction from public records must file for an expungement. Learn more about filing for expungement at mdcourts.gov/legalhelp/expungement.

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Two Morgan State University Students Awarded Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship

Prestigious Scholarship Supports International Travel and the Development of Proficiency in Various Languages and Cultures

By Morgan State University

Baltimore (June 18, 2024)—Two Morgan State University students—Estelle Georges (sophomore) and Joyce Nagbe (sophomore)—have been selected to receive the prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. Through the highly competitive program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, both will receive funding to participate in international learning opportunities. Each will receive a \$3,000 scholarship to study or intern abroad and complete a Follow-on Service Project.

“Our two Gilman Scholarship awardees perfectly embody the array of opportunities this fund presents to its recipients while also providing a platform for students to broaden their horizons and develop a deeper understanding of the world,” said Moriah Ray, director of the Office of Study Abroad in the Division of International Affairs at Morgan. “The Gilman Scholarship allows our students to reach new heights in new places worldwide and bring a new meaning to world-class education.”

Estelle Georges, a sophomore majoring in accounting at the Earl G. Graves School of Business & Management, successfully navigated a rigorous and competitive application process and emerged as the proud recipient of the coveted scholarship. This scholarship enabled her to embark on a transformative academic journey to Seville, Spain, this past spring.

In addition to being a Gilman Scholar, Georges’ summer abroad



*Estelle Georges
Gilman Scholar*

experience is further supported by the Council on International Educational Exchange, renowned for supporting exceptional student study-abroad opportunities. As part of this immersive program, George was selected for a global internship placement at a distinguished real estate company in Seville. This internship presented an invaluable opportunity to gain hands-on experience and insights into the workings of the real estate profession internationally. She will return to America in July.

Joyce Nagbe, a sophomore nursing major in the School of Community Health & Policy, will pursue her studies in Africa. This incredible opportunity will allow Nagbe to embark on a faculty-led experience in Accra, Ghana, hosted by the Department of Teacher Education & Professional Development (TEPD) during the fall 2024 semester. The scholarship will support her educational journey, providing invaluable experiences in a



*Joyce Nagbe
Gilman Scholar*

different culture and healthcare setting. Last fall, TEPD faculty members Thurman Bridges, Ph.D., Valerie Riggs, Ed.D., and Simone Gibson, Ph.D., led more than a dozen Morgan students to Ghana to study abroad.

Added Program Director Ray, “When students engage with diverse cultures and environments, it empowers them and enhances their ability to comprehend the complexities of our global society. This kind of experiential learning holds the potential to shape their future decision-making skills in a profound way.”

As scholarship recipients, the students will represent Morgan and American culture and values in diverse international settings while refining their fluency in a specific foreign language. The esteemed Gilman Scholarship is viewed as a gateway for students to secure a long-term career in international affairs through the State Department as it dramatically expands their network and global competencies. The program is designed to cultivate the

next generation of American leaders by endowing them with indispensable professional skills, including a global perspective.

The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs funds the Gilman Scholarship Program, awarding approximately 3,000 scholarships annually to undergraduate students who are U.S. citizens to study or intern abroad.

Its primary goal is to encourage and facilitate greater participation of U.S. students in studying abroad and to emphasize the importance of learning languages critical to the nation’s security. This program was established following the enactment of the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000. Morgan’s first Gilman Scholar recipient was in 2021. To date, the university has had six recipients, with recent Gilman awardees being Jayla Pope (2023) and Michele Kamara (2022).

Notably, the Gilman Scholarship has played a crucial role in providing financial support to undergraduate students, particularly those with significant financial need. It has particularly prioritized assisting individuals historically underrepresented in international education. Such groups include first-generation college students, students belonging to ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities, attendees of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) or other minority-serving institutions, students from community colleges, and those hailing from rural areas, small towns, and U.S. states with lower rates of participation in study abroad programs.

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Ravens Players Receive Message for Offseason

By Tyler Hamilton

The organized team activities (OTA) and minicamp were an opportunity for the newest version of the Baltimore Ravens team to come together and set the tone for the upcoming season. After reaching the AFC Championship game last season and losing to the Kansas City Chiefs, the message is clear. Go win a championship.

OTAs and minicamp wrapped up last week. Now they're on to the offseason which is a time that can be a pitfall for some players. Veteran safety Marcus Williams had a clear message he wanted to drive home to his teammates as they departed Owings Mills for the offseason.

"Right now, it's just, stay smart," Williams said last week. "Get your mind right, get ready for the season [and] get healthy, because it's a long season ahead."

The season is indeed going to be long. Ravens rookies are scheduled to report on July 13 with the veterans checking in on July 20. The journey to that point is going to require focus and determination after the players take a brief break to refresh themselves before ramping things up heading to training camp.

Ravens coach, John Harbaugh, challenged his players to push themselves when they're away from the team.

"There's intentionality to everything we do," Harbaugh said. "There should be a plan in terms of what we're trying to accomplish every day. So, what are you trying to accomplish for the next weeks that lead into training camp to put you in position to have the best training camp to handle the loads



Lamar Jackson and Mark Andrews

Photo: The Canadian Press

involved, become the best team we can be and be intentional about that every single day?"

Quarterback Lamar Jackson is coming off his second MVP season but that doesn't mean he's taking his foot off the gas as he prepares for what's to come in 2024. Jackson told the media his offseason is over and now it's time to lock in on getting ready to chase a

Super Bowl. That's been the goal for Jackson since he was drafted.

One of the things Jackson plans to do is get his receivers and tight ends together for a passing camp.

"I would love to do that, but some guys don't want to leave their state," Jackson said. "They're going to have to come to South Florida. They're going to have to do it. We have to. We're

trying to get to the Super Bowl, and for us to do that, we have to grind. We have to build chemistry."

The Ravens came close to fulfilling their goal to bring a third Super Bowl trophy to Baltimore. They went out and made some big moves to set them up for another run. The next step is putting in the necessary work to fulfill the goal this season.



The proposed ritual, The Overcome: A Black Passover, is the concept of a yearly celebration of and by African Americans commemorating the significance of overcoming slavery, Jim Crow, and institutionalized racism to ascent as leaders in all walks of life. This proposed ritual has been compared to the yearly commemorated Jewish Passover. The book The Overcome: A Black Passover delineates the logical explanation of a celebration. Overcome: Rite, Liturgy & Songs outlines the actual celebratory ceremony. So, like those of Jewish ancestry, **there is no going back to Egypt and for African Americans, there is no going back to slavery!**

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