

Mississippi officials block COVID vaccine misinformation

By Leah Willingham
Associated Press/
Report for America

The Mississippi State Department of Health is now blocking comments on its Facebook posts that relate to COVID-19 because of a “rise of misinformation” about the virus and vaccinations, a health official said. “The comments section of our Facebook page has increasingly come to be dominated by misinformation about COVID-19,” state health department spokesperson Liz Sharlot said in a statement.

Sharlot said allowing the comments that “mislead the public about the safety, importance and effectiveness of vaccination” is “directly contrary” to the state’s public health mission, which includes encouraging members of the public to be vaccinated against the virus, which has been recently making a resurgence in the state.

Only about 31% of Mississippians have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, a statistic that ranks near the bottom of U.S. states.

The Department of Health posts multiple times each day on its Facebook page about COVID-19. Posts include information on num-

bers of new coronavirus cases in the state, details on pop-up vaccination clinics and transportation services to vaccination clinics for homebound residents.

Sharlot said the comments will be back when the department has “the resources to effectively curb misleading, harmful and off-topic commentary that disserves the public.” Federal regulators have said the vaccines are safe and offer strong protection against contracting the potentially life-threatening disease.

Mississippi health officials announced on Friday that they are recommending that people 65 and older and those with chronic underlying medical conditions refrain from attending indoor mass social gatherings in the coming weeks because of a rising number of coronavirus cases in the state.

State officials have also advised in the last week that vulnerable people should avoid indoor mass gatherings whether or not they are vaccinated, through at least July 26, and that people who are not vaccinated should wear a mask when in public settings.

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Jeremiah “JJ” Williamson returns home and performs at Chuckles Comedy Club

By Jackie Hampton
Publisher

Known as “JJ from The Sipp”, Jackson, MS native Jeremiah Williamson performed in front of a live audience at Chuckles Comedy Club located in Jackson on Ridgewood Rd. on July 9- July 10.

Williamson, who resides in Atlanta, GA is described as a stand - up performer who has taken the comedy world by storm with his uncanny relatability, charismatic wit and hometown country style. His long-time friend Jackson Police Department Sergeant, Cedric Myles, known by many Jacksonians as “Hot Dog” attended elementary, middle and high school with Williamson. He describes his friend as a down home guy, who has never forgotten his roots. The two friends grew up in West Jackson on Alta Vista Blvd. Myles said, “JJ was always cracking jokes. He was the life of the party when we were growing up.”

After graduating from Jim Hill High School Williamson articulated at Alcorn State University where he was a member of the marching band. Since 1995 he has performed in comedy clubs all across the country. He has shared the stage with notable names in the comedy world such as Chris Tucker, D.L. Hughley and Ricky Smiley.

When asked by The Mississippi Link what type humor does



Williamson entertaining his audience

PHOTOS BY JAY JOHNSON

his friend provide Myles said “Real-Life adult humor issues. He puts me in the mind of Richard Pryor and Bernie Mack.”

In addition to comedy routines Williamson has performed on the big screen in his acting debut, co-starring as the hilarious Cousin Bodie in the hit movie Johnson Family Vacation alongside Cedric “The Entertainer, Vanessa Williams, Bow Wow and Steve Harvey.

Williamson, when inter-

viewed by The Mississippi Link how did he acquire the name “JJ” he said, “I heard rumors that my aunt, who lived in Chicago, could not spell Jeremiah so she started calling me “JJ” and the rest is history.”

Williamson said coming home to perform was so special to him because Jackson reared him to be who he is. “I love coming home because I get to see my family, my classmates, my daughter and grandchildren and

I can be myself.”

Williamson, the father of one adult daughter and a teenage son, stated he was very well received in Jackson. He said people came out in droves and he felt their energy and their love. “The audience seemed very excited to see me,” he said.

Being a performer was a childhood dream of Williamson but he kept it under wrap

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Pressured by allies, Biden escalates fight for voting rights

By Jonathan Lemire, Brian Slo-dysko and Zeke Miller
Associated Press

President Joe Biden aimed to lay out the “moral case” for voting rights Tuesday as Texas Democrats took dramatic action to stymie their state’s latest effort in a nationwide Republican push to tighten ballot restrictions.

Biden has proclaimed protecting ballot access the central cause of his presidency. But the White House has faced sharp criticism from allies for not doing more, though political headwinds and stubborn Senate math have greatly restricted its ability to act.

Biden’s afternoon speech in Philadelphia on voting comes a day after Texas Democrats decamped for Washington in an effort to deny their GOP-controlled Legislature the necessary quorum to pass a bill placing new restrictions on voting in the state.



The lawmakers, who arrived in the nation’s capital Monday night, said they were prepared to stay in Washington _ out of the reach of Texas law enforcement _ until a special legislative ses-

sion concludes early next month. It marks a dramatic new showdown over voting in America.

Several states have enacted new voting restrictions, and others are debating them, as the

Rep. Marc Veasey, D-Texas, center left, and Rep. Lloyd Doggett, D-Texas, joined at left by Rep. Chris Turner, chairman of the Texas House Democratic Caucus, welcome Democratic members of the Texas legislature at a news conference at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, July 13, 2021. The lawmakers left Austin hoping to deprive the Texas Legislature of a quorum — the minimum number of representatives who have to be present for the body to operate, as they try to kill a Republican bill making it harder to vote in the Lone Star State.
AP PHOTO/J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE

GOP has seized on former President Donald Trump’s false claim of massive voter fraud in the 2020 election as a rationale for curtailing ballot access.

Some GOP-led states have

worked to roll back the vote-by-mail expansion that was put in place in the past presidential election due to COVID-19 fears. Others have tried to strengthen voter identification requirements

and curtail hours and locations for early voting and ballot drop-offs.

Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott said he would keep calling special sessions through next year if necessary to pass his state’s legislation, and raised the possibility of Democrats facing arrest upon returning home.

At the base of the U.S. Capitol Tuesday morning, the Texas lawmakers, joined by two Democratic members of the state’s congressional delegation, called on the Biden administration and the Senate to take more dramatic action.

“We need the president and the vice president and every Democrat in this Senate working together to preserve American democracy,” said Rep. Lloyd Doggett, who represents a district stretching from San Antonio to Austin. “We need to see in the

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Inside
NFL players serve as coaches at Coach Deion Sanders football camp at MS Veterans Stadium



Traveling (While) Black



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NFL players serve as coaches at Coach Deion Sanders football camp at MS Veterans Stadium

By Tim Ward
Sports Writer

Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium, home of the Jackson State Tigers, hosted a football camp created by Deion Sanders and sponsored by Gatorade. Approximately 300 high school and junior college players attended the camp from as far as California. Coaches from Mississippi junior colleges, SWAC colleges, and a few other conferences, such as the MEAC were in attendance to check out prospects. Of course, Coach Deion Sanders was enough to make the camp worthwhile, but also, the coaches who assisted him. Former NFL players and current NFL players served as coaches and advised campers during drills and breakout sessions.

A couple of Mississippians, Brandon high school's Demario Davis, linebacker for the New Orleans Saints, and Jim Hill high school's Fred Brown, wide receiver for the Tennessee Titans coached and attended respectively. Nate Newton, Antoine Bethea, Tyrann Mathieu, Marcus Peters, DeAngelo Hall, and Terrell Owens were the other NFL former and current players who coached.

Campers completed drills based on their football position, were timed in the 40 yard dash, and competed against other campers. The energy was great. The NFL players were great responding with the campers. From taking pics on phones, sending messages, and even competing with them in the drills, the players created an awesome atmosphere.

Coach Prime said, "I'm more appreciative of all the other coaches who came here. That's what I'm very appreciative of. I'm very thankful. They didn't have to,

especially on this wonderful prestigious weekend in our country, and a Father's Day weekend at that. They saw fit to come and I love it. I'm happy and elated about that." Coach Prime could be seen going from station to station watching the various drills and listening to the interactions amongst players and coaches. And it wouldn't be Deion Sanders without the smile that brightens every room with he enters.

Jackson State players were able to interact with the NFL players. One of the highlights of the camp was Terrell Owens battling one on one with a couple of JSU defensive backs. The crowd loved it. The campers loved. Owens showed why he's in the hall of fame. The defensive backs didn't back down. They competed. Exactly what Coach Prime expects from his players. Sanders took on the role of leveling the playing field for HBCUs, not just JSU. A person of Sanders caliber and famed and connections, has brought media exposure to HBCUs. It also, seems to have inspired others. Former NFL great, Eddie George, took the head coaching job at Tennessee State in April. These coaching hires have sparked conversation nationwide about players and coaches choosing HBCUs over the Power 5 schools.

During the spring season of the SWAC, Jackson State went 4-3 under Coach Prime. Covid-19 delayed and cancelled games also for the Tigers. Things appear to be in place for a "normal" football season. Jackson State is preparing for their season opener in Miami against newly joined SWAC member, FAMU. The game is September 5th and expected to be on ESPN 2.



Coach "Prime" Deion Sanders had a successful camp



New Orleans Saint's Linebacker De Mario Davis addresses football campers



Terrell Owens lines up against JSU defensive back PHOTOS BY TIM WARD



It's good to be healthy.
It's good to be Blue.

Williamson

Continued from page 1

because he could never see himself being able to leave Jackson and pursue a career in comedy or acting. As a young child he grew up watching and admiring legendary comedians like Arsenio Hall and Red Fox and from them he started grasping his own style. He said, I never told anyone, including God that I wanted a career in comedy but God always knew,” he said.

A proud graduate of Alcorn State University, Williamson shared that he was so anxious to leave Mississippi right after graduating from Alcorn with a degree in Industrial Technology, that he lied and told his parents he already had a job in Atlanta and could start immediately. “I stepped out on faith, believed in myself and never looked back” he said.

After 26 years of performing, Williamson was asked what pushed him to go out on faith. He said it was one New Year’s Eve while hanging out with people and making them laugh someone mentioned he was so funny he could be a stand-up comedian. He was so excited and inspired he knew without a doubt this was his destiny and purpose being realized. Soon afterward, he started working at Uptown Comedy Corner in Atlanta and his career took off from there.

Williamson said before he performs he lets people know that Atlanta, GA is his home but Jackson, MS is his upbringing. He is proud to be known as “JJ from the Sipp.”



Attendees enjoying the show



Tiffany Burks, Brian Anderson Williamson, Henry Cotton, Sandra Cotton



Williamson energized by crowd



Mabel Chapman, Williamson, Shirley Johnson

COVID

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State Health Officer Dr. Thomas Dobbs cited a sharp increase in cases of the highly contagious delta variant, which is now the predominant strain of COVID-19 in the state.

Dobbs tweeted Tuesday that 12 children were in an intensive care unit with the delta variant, with 10 on ventilators.

“Delta Surge — be careful,” he wrote.

On June 21, 91 people were hospitalized

with COVID-19 in Mississippi. On Sunday, that number had risen to 228 people, according to health officials.

Leah Willingham is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists

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administration and in the Senate the same courage that these Texans have demonstrated.”

Biden’s speech in Philadelphia, to be delivered at the National Constitution Center, is intended as the opening salvo of a public pressure campaign, White House aides said, even as legislative options to block voting restrictions face significant obstacles.

“He’ll lay out the moral case for why denying the right to vote is a form of suppression and a form of silencing,” White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday. “He will redouble his commitment to using every tool at his disposal to continue to fight to protect the fundamental right of Americans to vote against the onslaught of voter suppression laws.”

Psaki said Biden would vow to “overcome the worst challenge to our democracy since the Civil War.” But aides suggested his address would not contain much in the way of new proposals.

Democrats on Capitol Hill have already tried to respond with a sweeping federal voting and elections bill that Senate Republicans have united to block. Most Republicans have similarly dismissed a separate bill, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would restore sections of the Voting Rights Act that the Supreme Court has weakened.

Those roadblocks have increased focus on Senate filibuster rules, which, if left in place, would seem to provide an insurmountable roadblock, requiring 60 votes in the evenly split, 100-member chamber to even bring up controversial legislation. Republicans have been unanimous in opposition to eliminating the filibuster, and it would take elimination or at least modification for the bills to have a chance of passage.

Moderate Democrats including Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona also have so far expressed reluctance to changing the Senate rules.

Many Democrats have expressed frustration

with the lack of a greater White House push to change the filibuster, with civil rights activists stressing that Biden was elected with broad support from Black people whose votes are often put at risk by voting restrictions. House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, a longtime Biden ally, urged this week that the filibuster be modified for voting rights legislation.

Biden, himself a veteran of the Senate, has offered some support for filibuster changes. But he has not put his full political weight behind the issue, believing it counterproductive in both the legislative and political fights over voting. He and Vice President Kamala Harris, who is leading the administration’s efforts on voting rights, met last week with some of the civil rights leaders, who made clear that they expected a legislative solution.

“Our backs are against the wall. This is the moment. We have no more time,” said Sherrilyn Ifill, president of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, after the meeting. “I told the president: We will not be able to litigate our way out of this threat to Black citizenship.”

Although not abandoning hope of legislative action, the West Wing has been shifting focus to other measures to protect voting, including legal remedies pursued by the Justice Department and action in individual states, according to officials. There also will be an emphasis on boosting voter turnout, with aides pointing to success Democrats had in getting out votes last year during the height of the pandemic.

Officials concede, though, that turning out voters is always harder in a nonpresidential election year. Some frustrated aides, seeing the reality in the Senate, believe too much of a focus has been placed on federal legislative measures and think that civic and business groups can also play a role in fighting the voting restrictions. They note that an outcry in Georgia helped water down some of the GOP’s proposed plans there.

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Mabel Chapman, Williamson, Shirley Johnson

First board meeting with five African American women elected to Byram’s Board of Aldermen

By Edelia Dr. Jay Carthan
Contributing Writer

Five African American women were elected to Byram’s Board of Aldermen during the June 8 elections and were sworn in on July 1. The City of Byram held its first board meeting since the election of new officers on July 8.

The Byram Board of Aldermen are made up of five African-American women and two white men: Erma Johnson, Ward 1, Diandra Hosey, Ward 2, Charlie Campbell, Ward 3, Teresa Mack, Ward 4, Rochelle Gibson 5, David Moore 6, and Dr. Roshunda Harris-Allen, Aldermen at Large. Mayor Richard White was re-elected as mayor.

“I am elated that there are five African American women on the board. I believe women have a lot to offer when it comes to leadership. We can run our homes, our businesses, and be leaders in our community, Alderwoman Johnson said. “The diversity that we all bring to the board with our collective knowledge in business, policy, education, etc. can only serve the city of Byram in the most positive way. I am excited to see what we can accomplish together.”

“I am completely filled with gratitude about five African American women being elected to the board of Aldermen in our great city of Byram,” Alder-



Alderman Johnson said she believes women have a lot to offer when it comes to leadership.

woman Gibson said. “It is an honor and privilege to be a part of this historical event which will relay a sense of hope for all generations to come. Glory be to God.”

Alderwomen Erma Johnson, Rochelle Gibson and Dr. Roshunda Harris-Allen are new to the board and Diandra Hosey and Teresa Mack were reelected to the board.

“I am very excited. This is a very historic moment. I noticed it has been well received throughout the metro area. Our inauguration was packed. We’ve never had a packed city hall before,”

Alderwoman Hosey said. “I am excited about the city of Byram. We are thriving. We are growing. We invite people to come and shop in Byram. I am excited to work with African American women.”

“Serving the citizens of Byram for the last eight years has been a great honor. The fact that four additional women of color have been elected to the Board of Aldermen makes me proud, said Alderwoman Mack. “I feel delighted knowing the citizens of Byram made their voices heard. I look forward to the progress and development awaiting all citi-

zens of this great, maturing city.”

Dr. Harris-Allen made history as the first African American and woman elected to a city-wide position in the city of Byram and to hold the Alderman at Large position.

“It’s a great feeling. I am glad and excited to have this opportunity,” Alderwoman Harris-Allen said about her historic election. “I couldn’t have done this without the citizens of Byram. I wouldn’t be in this seat if the citizens of Byram wouldn’t have gone to the polls on June 8 and voted for me. So, I am looking forward to working with the citi-

zens of Byram, and I’m excited about what these next four years will bring.”

When asked about what they hope to accomplish within the next four years, all five women mentioned infrastructure, roads, bridges, and creating better recreation opportunities for our Youth.

During the board meeting, Hosey was voted Mayor Pro Tem which serves in the absence of the mayor. Hosey was nominated by Alderman Moore and Dr. Harris-Allen was nominated by Alderman Theresa Mack. The board voted 4 to 3 for Hosey

to serve as Mayor Pro Tem. In the past, the Alderman at Large served as Mayor Pro Tem. The mayor’s recommendations for fire chief, police chief and city judge were also approved by the board during the first board meeting.

Regular Board Meetings of the Mayor and Aldermen are the second and fourth Thursday each month, 7:00P.M., City Hall, 5901 Terry Road. Citizens are encouraged to attend either in person or by Zoom. Visit the City of Byram’s website for the Zoom link and more information.



Fire Chief, Fred Green with wife by his side, being sworn in by Municipal Court Judge, Damon Stevenson. While Mayor Richard White looks on.

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Second Wind Dreams’ Receives Six Month Extension for Civil Money Penalty (CMP) Funding

Mississippi Link Newswire

Second Wind Dreams® is an internationally known nonprofit organization changing the perception of aging through the fulfillment of dreams and the offering of the patented Virtual Dementia Tour® to help caregivers understand the physical and cognitive challenges facing those with dementia. Founded in 1997 by award-winning geriatric specialist PK. Beville, M.S., the Atlanta-based organization is recognized as the first in the nation to focus on enhancing the quality of life for elders through the fulfillment of dreams.

Second Wind Dreams® (SWD®) has recently been approved for a six-month extension to its’ current grant in Mississippi. In 2019, the Mississippi Division of Medicaid announced that Second Wind Dreams (SWD®) had been approved by the Centers for

Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to use Civil Money Penalty (CMP) funding in 125 Mississippi skilled nursing homes.

The two-year project to assist nursing home staff to improve care for dementia residents by providing hands-on, experiential training using the patented Virtual Dementia Tour® (VDT®) was disrupted due to COVID-19. Slots are still available for skilled nursing homes to receive hands-on, experiential training leading to improved person-centered care at no cost to the nursing home. The grant will be ongoing until March 2022.

SWD will be contacting all eligible skilled nursing facilities not currently participating in the program to provide program information and an application.

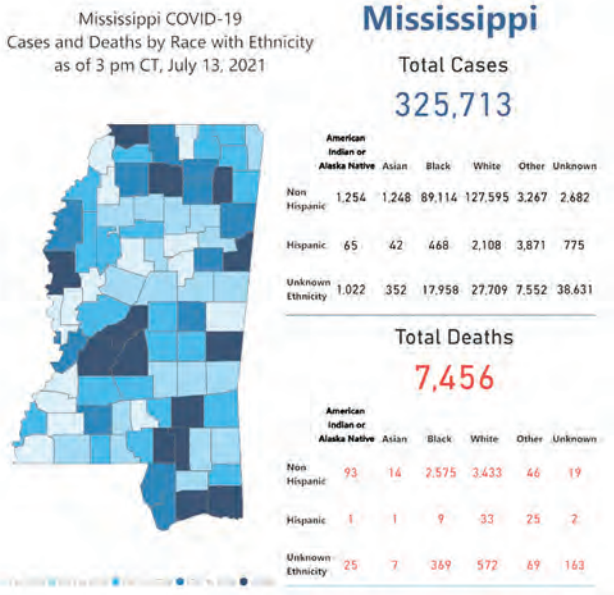
The VDT has been scientifically proven to build a greater

understanding of dementia using sensory tools and instructions. A Second Wind Dreams Certified VDT Trainer will conduct the training at participating nursing homes and supervise the implementation of the VDT and related assessments that measure person-centered care outcomes.

Katherine Boyet, the Mississippi Grants Coordinator, is excited for the extension saying, “I’m just thrilled that the State of Mississippi sees the value and importance of continuing to offer the VDT Education Program to skilled nursing homes across the state. We want to ‘reach and teach’ as many as possible with this evidence based, patented program.”

If you would like more information about this grant, please contact Second Wind Drams at 470-242-0905 or email us at grants@secondwind.org.

MISSISSIPPI COVID-19 UPDATE





Another Reason To Brush Your Teeth

By Vince Faust
Tips to be Fit

Did you know that if you have problems with your teeth and gums it can affect your health in a number of adverse ways. A number of studies show that good oral health can play a major role in preventing a number of serious health conditions that include heart disease, diabetes, pneumonia, dementia, rheumatoid arthritis and some types of cancer.

Mild cases of periodontal disease called gingivitis and periodontitis bacteria that accumulate on your teeth and gums mainly cause a more severe disease. Your body will try to fight off the accumulating bacteria. Over time this bacteria will get into your body and cause the development of serious diseases.

Heart Disease:

20 studies show a link between chronic periodontal diseases and had an increase risk for heart disease.

Diabetes:

A study done at the State University of New York at Buffalo showed that people with diabetes had chronic periodontal disease 66% of the time. That 66% also had a harder time controlling their blood sugar. Having diabetes raises your risk for developing heart disease. Diabetes can



reduce your body's resistance to infection. This will put your gums at risk. Gum disease is more frequent and severe among people who have diabetes. If you have diabetes, periodontitis makes it difficult for the body to properly absorb insulin medication that lowers blood sugar levels.

Cancer:

That same study done at the State University of New York at Buffalo showed that people

with chronic periodontal disease had a 65% chance of developing tongue cancer. A study done at Harvard School of Public Health showed a 63% higher risk of developing pancreatic cancer.

Pneumonia:

When you breathe air goes through your mouth and into your lungs. If you have a large amount of bad bacteria in your mouth this bacterium will find its way into your lungs and cause pneumonia and other re-

spiratory problems. Seniors should make sure to take care of their teeth and including dentures. Pneumonia can become life threatening when it strikes a person over 65.

Dementia:

A Swedish study showed that there was a 30% to 40% increase risk of developing dementia in women that had the fewest teeth at middle age. Most tooth loss is due to chronic periodontal disease.

Rheumatoid Arthritis:

82% of the people that had rheumatoid arthritis had chronic periodontal disease. Treating existing gum inflammation and infection will reduce joint pain and inflammation.

Pregnancy and gum disease don't mix. Small studies show that gum disease could cause you to have a baby that is born too early and too small. More studies are needed to confirm the link.

The Mayo Clinic recommends the following to help maintain good oral health:

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day with a soft-bristled brush using fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss daily.
- Use mouthwash to remove food particles left after brushing and flossing.
- Eat a healthy diet and limit

food with added sugars.

- Replace your toothbrush every three months or sooner if bristles are splayed or worn.
- Schedule regular dental checkups and cleanings.
- Avoid tobacco use.

I also recommend exercise, have a healthy diet, reduce your stress and get some sleep.

A complete workout should include exercises for each body part. This will include the chest, shoulders, triceps, back, biceps, forearm, thighs, calves and your abdominals (midsection). Start with 2 or 3 different exercises for each body part. Gradually work up to 8-12 repetitions for each exercise. Do each exercise 1-3 times to start. If you can do more than 12 repetitions for a set the weight is too light. If you can't do at least 8 repetitions for a set the weight is too heavy.

Your daily intake of food should include 2 to 3 servings of protein, 4 to 6 servings of vegetables, 2 to 3 servings of a grain and 4 to 6 servings of fruit. You should ingest no more than 14 grams of saturated fat, which is 126 calories. You should fuel your body throughout the day to maintain energy and keep you from bingeing during the day.

When you are stressed, anxious or depressed, you are at higher risk for poor oral health.

People under stress produce high levels of the hormone cortisol that will affect your gums and body. Stress will affect your daily routine. Most people under stress are more than 50% less likely to brush or floss regularly. You are also more likely to smoke, drink alcohol, use illegal drugs and clench and grind your teeth.

The amount of sleep needed each night varies among people. Each person needs a particular amount of sleep in order to be fully alert throughout the day. Research has shown that when healthy adults are allowed to sleep unrestricted, the average time slept is 8 to 8.5 hours. Some people need more than that to avoid problem sleepiness; others need less. If a person does not get enough sleep, even on one night, a "sleep debt" begins to build and increases until enough sleep is obtained. Problem sleepiness occurs as the debt accumulates. Many people do not get enough sleep during the workweek and then sleep longer on the weekends or days off to reduce their sleep debt. If too much sleep has been lost, sleeping in on the weekend may not completely reverse the effects of not getting enough sleep during the week.

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Member:



Adams Completes Summer Internship with USDA-NRCS in Indio, California

By Renita Lacy
Staff Writer

Gaining real life experience is invaluable for students when selecting a profession after college. That was especially the case for rising senior Alisha Adams, an agribusiness management major.

This summer, Adams had the opportunity to intern with the United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) in Indio, California.

Her primary duties included completing conservation training courses via AgLearn, performing highly erodible land (HEL) determinations, and determining resource treatment levels using the conservation planning process.

“Within my first two weeks of working with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services, I had learned so much. I feel very proud to have been selected for this opportunity. I am also grateful for being assigned to the best supervisor and team that care to help me grow as a beginner trainee,” she said.

“I have visited several fields which consisted of cropland, grazing pastures and community gardens. We have also analyzed air and soil quality while discussing the best conservation practices with our farmers. Our objective is to ensure better health and protection within our soils, air, plants, water systems and wildlife for future purposes.”

In addition to handling business in the field, Adams says she has greatly enjoyed her time spent in the Golden State.

“With this being my first time in the west coast, exploring Southern California through work and leisure has brought me great joy,” said the Columbus, OH native. “So far I’ve visited the



Adams

Grand Canyon, the Mojave Desert, and the city of Los Angeles. The scenery is beyond gorgeous, as we see mountains, citrus trees, and palm trees nonstop. The food here is pretty good too, especially if you’re a Mexican, Asian or plant-based cuisine lover.”

Adams says she is thankful for the opportunity to work with the USDA. Her advice to other students seeking internships for the first time are to network, be confident and engaged, and never be afraid to ask questions.

“The most memorable thing that I’ve learned so far is time management and how to pay attention to detail. Whether being in the field or office, it is important to ask questions and communicate thoroughly for clarity,” she said.

Michael Trusclair, USDA Program Liaison, stated, “I am extremely grateful that we have resources like the USDA-NRCS that continue to welcome our students with open arms. It is our utmost goal to provide our students with opportunities to gain experience, make connections, strengthen their resumes, and most importantly, consider their interests in their desired field of study.”

Upon graduation, Adams hopes to begin her career with the agency.

For more information or to learn more, please visit www.usda.gov or contact Trusclair at michael.trusclair@usda.gov.

Alcorn Scientist Receives USDA-NIFA Capacity Building Grant to Conduct Research

By Renita Lacy
Staff Writer

Alcorn State University’s Dr. Ananda Nanjundaswamy is on his way to great discoveries, as he is the recipient of a \$413,257 grant for conducting scientific research.

The grant, awarded by the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA), funds a three-year project entitled, “Engineering Impact-Resistant Hydrophobic Micro-crystalline Cellulose Biocomposites Using Switchgrass, Giant Miscanthus, And DDGS,” which involves the production and examination of biomass feedstock such as switchgrass, miscanthus, and DDGS for the development of biocomposite panels.

“I was ecstatic to receive this collective funding, as it has a strong student training component,” said Nanjundaswamy, who currently serves as an associate professor in the Department of Agriculture. “It also provides a great opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students at Alcorn State University to gain hands-on experience in the engineering and testing of biocomposites,” he stated.

According to Nanjundaswamy, biocomposites are sustainable materials produced from plant biomass or other agricultural resources with applications in construction, automobiles, and much more.



Nanjundaswamy

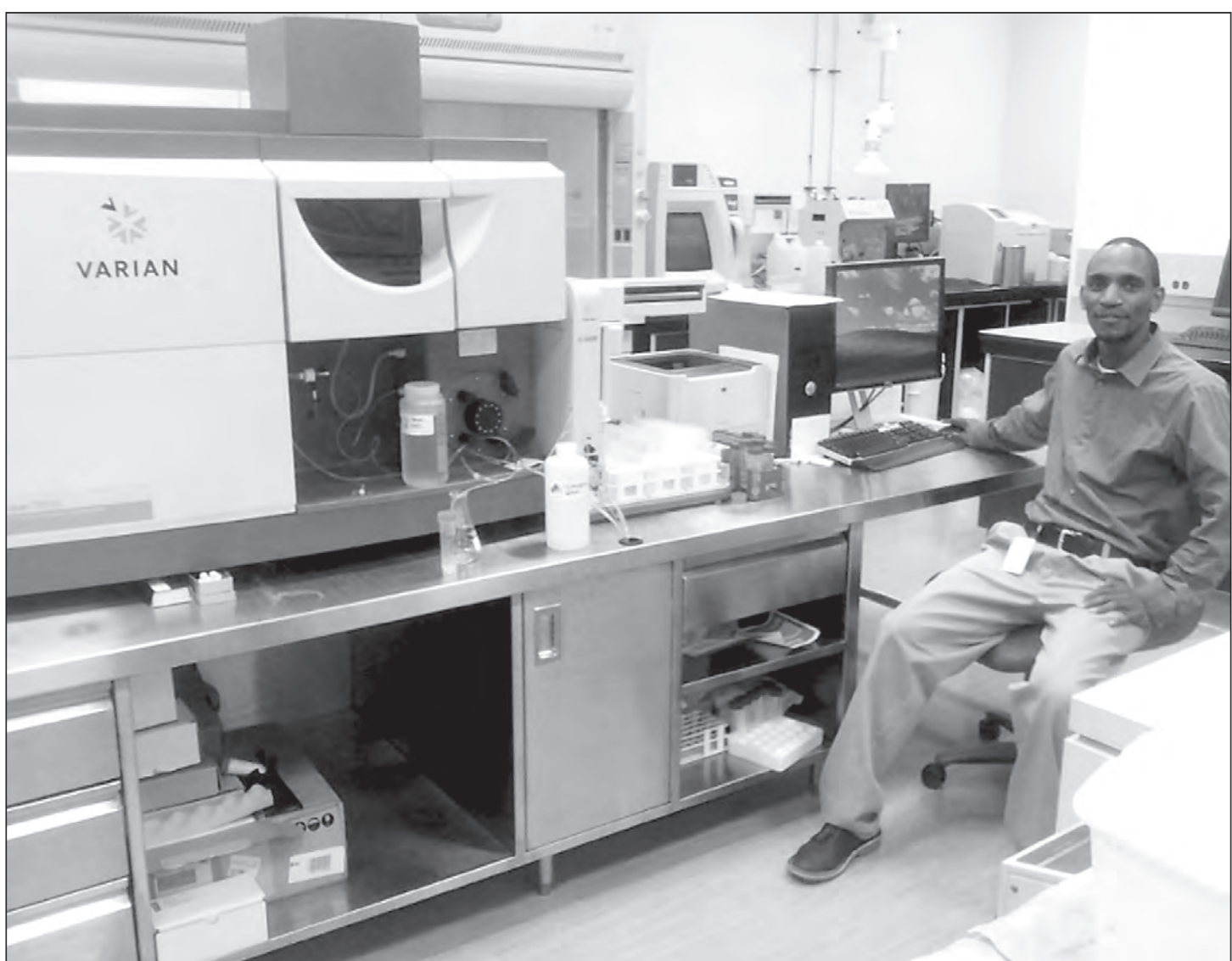
It is his belief that the project will lay a foundation for future research projects as well as for the training of students in bio-based product development.

“With an emphasis on building a strong bio-economy, there will be an enhanced demand for well-trained undergraduate and graduate students to fill high-paying jobs,” said Nanjundaswamy. “I would like for our students to be at the forefront of capturing those opportunities.”

A collaborative effort, the project will be led by Nanjundaswamy, who serves as the principal investigator (PI). Dr. Jason Street, associate professor in the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts at Mississippi State University, and Dr. Tejas Pandya, assistant professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Mississippi, will serve as co-principal investigators (Co-PIs).

For more information or to learn more, visit www.nifa.usda.gov. You may also contact Nanjundaswamy at 601.877.2314 or ananda@alcorn.edu.

Alcorn professor receives grant to improve the quality of poultry products



By Renita Lacy
Staff Writer

Dr. Samuel Mwangi, assistant professor of animal science in Alcorn State University’s Department of Agriculture, received a capacity grant award in the amount of \$491,875 from the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). The funding will allow Mwangi and his team to study ways to help improve the safety and quality of poultry products.

“One of the main objectives and goals of my research is to find solutions for existing or future challenges faced by minority farmers in the poultry industry,” said Mwangi. “I



Mwangi

am very grateful for this funding from the USDA-NIFA, as I know that it will help to expand and strengthen the poultry research capabilities at Alcorn State University.”

Within his research, Mwangi plans to investigate the potential use of purslane as a feed ingredient for the improvement

of poultry meat and egg quality. He also intends to study the impact of pastured poultry on soil and water quality in crop and poultry ecosystems.

“Receiving the award was very heartwarming, especially as a young scientist,” said Mwangi. “It certainly provides a major milestone in my career, and will allow me to continue training and educating students in different areas of poultry science.”

On this project, Mwangi is collaborating with Alcorn State University’s Dr. Leonard Kibet, assistant professor of soil and environmental Sciences; Dr. Frank Mrema, assistant professor of agriculture; Anthony Reed, director of Special

Projects, School of Agriculture and Applied Sciences; and Dr. Min Byungrok, assistant professor of agriculture, University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) provides leadership and funding for programs that advance agriculture-related sciences. The organization actively invests in and supports initiatives that ensure the long-term viability of agriculture.

For more information or to learn more, please visit www.nifa.usda.gov. You may also contact Mwangi at 601.877.6572 or smwangi@alcorn.edu.

Alcorn Extension Explores Global Buckets: A New Way to Farm

By Renita Lacy
Staff Writer

Educators from the Health and Wellness Community and Family Garden, an entity of the Alcorn State University Extension Program (ASUEP), has implemented a container gardening project for local family and community gardens. Inspired by the work of Max and Grant Buster, the Alcorn State University Extension Program is exploring more inventive ways to reduce food insecurity, improve nutrition intake, and strengthen family relationships.

The container garden concept teaches the principles and practices of soil, water and crop management. According to Ralph Arrington, extension associate, ASUEP, the objective is to teach individuals the basic concepts of agronomy and aquaculture sustainability. Using two five gallon buckets placed inside of one another, this unique system for growing food is said to reduce water usage between 50% and 80%, with a 100% reduction in weeds. Once planted, very little



attention is required, and individuals with little to no training can reap bountiful benefits.

The advantages of instructing and managing the global bucket container garden verses traditional gardens concepts are: developing a mobile growing system to assist urban gar-

deners and producers in their understanding of soil, water, nutrient and pest management; transferring learning through the transit-sharing of fruits and vegetables during germination and production; and maintaining better nutrient and water management practices while

developing a consistent and comfortable environment for all.

For more information or to learn more, visit www.global-buckets.org. You may also contact Arrington at 601.857.0250 or ralpha@alcorn.edu.

Mississippi might have to rethink Capitol statues

By Emily Wagster Pettus
Associated Press

Mississippians find unity in bragging about the state’s influence on American culture. The state prides itself on being birthplace of the blues and home of towering literary figures.

Yet, even as the nation reconsiders the public display of Confederate monuments amid a reckoning over issues of racial injustice, Mississippi — a state with a 38% Black population — still represents itself inside the U.S. Capitol with still-life images of Confederates.

Each state can have two figures in the Capitol’s Statuary Hall collection, and Mississippi donated bronze statues of Jefferson Davis and James Zachariah George in 1931.

Davis served in the U.S. House and Senate from Mississippi before becoming president of the Confederacy. George was a member of Mississippi’s Secession Convention in 1861, and he signed the secession ordinance that included these words: “Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery — the greatest material interest of the world.”

On June 29, the Democratic-led U.S. House voted 285-120 in favor of a legislation “to remove all statues of individuals who voluntarily served the Confederate States of America from display in the United States Capitol.” The proposal awaits a vote in the Senate.

Democratic Rep. Bennie

Thompson is the only Black member of Mississippi’s four-person House delegation, and he was the only of the four to vote in favor of mandating removal of Confederate statues.

Statues “of those who served in the Confederacy or supported slavery or segregation should not have a place of honor in the U.S. Capitol — that’s why I voted to (hash)RemoveHate today,” Thompson wrote that day on Twitter.

Republican Reps. Trent Kelly and Steven Palazzo voted against the legislation. Republican Rep. Michael Guest missed the vote because a family member had died and he was delayed returning to Washington. However, Kelly said in a statement that he had voted

against a similar bill last year.

“I would be opposed to the federal government ordering or dictating Mississippi to remove those statues,” Guest said in the statement.

Even among the states that tried to secede from the Union, Mississippi is the only with two Confederate figures in the Statuary Hall collection.

One of Alabama’s statues is of a Confederate cavalry leader, “Fighting Joe” Wheeler. The other is Helen Keller, and the base of the statue includes an inscription in Braille.

One of Louisiana’s statues is of Edward Douglass White, who was a U.S. Supreme Court justice from 1894 until his death in 1921, spending his final 11 years as chief

justice. The other is of former Gov. Huey P. Long.

Virginia currently has one figure in Statuary Hall, and it is George Washington. In December, the state removed its statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee that had stood in the nation’s Capitol for 111 years.

“The Confederacy is a symbol of Virginia’s racist and divisive history, and it is past time we tell our story with images of perseverance, diversity, and inclusion,” Virginia’s Democratic governor, Ralph Northam, said in a statement.

Guest pointed out in his statement that the legislature of each state already has the power to decide which statues to send to the Capitol.

Mississippi legislators have shown no appetite for this debate, but they took a landmark vote in June 2020 to retire the last state flag that included the Confederate battle emblem. They don’t need to wait for a directive from Congress to start discussing other historical figures who could become Mississippi’s still-life representatives.

They could consider civil rights leaders Medgar Evers or Fannie Lou Hamer.

The arts world offers several prominent Mississippians: B.B. King, Elvis Presley, Margaret Walker Alexander, Eudora Welty, Richard Wright and William Faulkner.

Emily Wagster Pettus has covered Mississippi government and politics since 1994. Follow her on

Commissioner: MBI will be more open about public information

The Associated Press

The Mississippi Bureau of Investigation examines all fatal shootings by Mississippi police officers, and the agency has typically denied requests to release video footage and other evidence.

The commissioner of public safety tells the Sun Herald that the agency is changing its approach to allow for greater transparency.

Sean Tindell is a former state senator and a former judge who became commissioner in June 2020. He said he has directed the Department of Public Safety, which includes MBI, to be more responsive to public records requests.

In June, the agency released video footage and some investigative material from its investigation of a Harrison County deputy’s shooting of Reginald Johnson outside the Biloxi courthouse in January.

“As more and more of these incidents of officer-involved shootings are shared with the public in other parts of the country, I believe we need to be more transparent here in Mississippi as well,” Tindell said. “I’ve always been a big believer in transparency. I believe that if you ... maintain a cloak of secrecy, then it lends itself to conspiracy theories and incorrect assumptions. I believe the public should have a right to view the footage and understand exactly what happened.”

Tindell said his guidance for transparency applies to all agencies under his department. MBI

typically handles the investigations of fatal shootings by law enforcement officers on the Coast. A new law that took effect July 1 requires MBI to investigate all such shootings across the state.

The Sun Herald recently requested all records about the shooting death of Leonard Parker Jr. by a Gulfport police officer and received some investigative material, including investigators’ summaries of witness interviews, from MBI.

In the cases of both Parker’s and Johnson’s killings, MBI released a fraction of all investigative material. The file shared in response to the Sun Herald’s requests for records relating to Johnson’s death contained 14 pages, but one line in the documents described a “case report” of 480 pages.

The Sun Herald received 48 pages of records from MBI about its investigation of Gulfport officer Jason Cuevas’s fatal shooting of Parker. The complete investigative file provided by the special prosecutor who presented the case to the grand jury contained hundreds of pages, including crime scene investigative reports, as well as video recordings of witness interviews. There was no video footage of Cuevas shooting Parker.

While MBI will now release some evidence after any possible criminal charges have been resolved, experts in policing and criminal justice say there’s often little reason to wait to show footage to a victim’s family members and then to the public.

A “toolkit” for prosecutors and communities dealing with officer-involved fatalities, produced by the Institute for Innovation in Prosecution at John Jay College of Criminal Justice with input from law enforcement and citizens from around the country, recommends prosecutors “meet standards of transparency, i.e. release video footage within 10 days.”

Johnson’s family members, friends and protesters in Biloxi had called for law enforcement to release video footage in the weeks after Johnson was killed.

Dennis Kenney, a former police officer and professor at John Jay College, said he saw little reason to withhold the tape.

“There doesn’t appear to be any privacy issues with this video, and I would assume that the investigation should have been short and fairly precise,” he said.

Tindell told the Sun Herald he believes the video of Deputy Bobby Jackson shooting Johnson proves the shooting was justified.

“I saw an officer trying to defend himself, and, you know, it’s hard to watch,” Tindell said. “It’s heartbreaking to see and it’s easy to play armchair quarterback and say he (the deputy) should have done this or he should of that, but it’s a split-second decision. If it was somebody attacking me or one of my loved ones with a knife and I had an opportunity to defend them, I can’t say I wouldn’t have taken the same action this officer did.”

Judge nears decision on future of state mental health system

By Leah Willingham
Associated Press/Report for America

When Michael Hogan was appointed by a federal judge to help craft a road map for the future of Mississippi’s embattled mental health care system, he planned to tour community mental health centers in-person to see the state’s services in action. He hoped to speak to patients and employees — perspectives he said would be vital in charting the Department of Mental Health’s path forward.

That was in early 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic. Hogan, a mental health care veteran with 40 years of experience working across the country, said Monday in federal court his ability to work on the ground has been severely limited in the past year and half.

“I don’t know anything about the situation on the ground, which troubles me some,” he said.

Speaking at a hearing at the United States District Court in Jackson, Hogan said he feels the state has made progress at providing community-based programs for people with mental illness.

However, he repeatedly expressed concerns about a lack of data and analysis documenting the standards and overall effectiveness of the community mental health system, especially with how it’s doing at preventing hospitalizations. He said more should be done to reach out to community members for input.

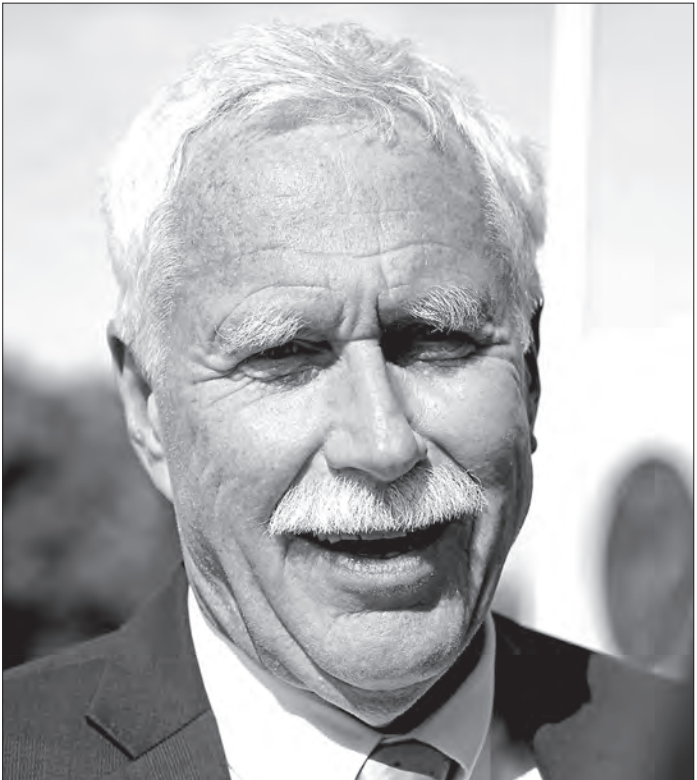
“The most troubling issue is the lack of data,” he said. “There’s no doubt that a lot of progress has been made since the time of the trial, but we don’t know what it has been.”

U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves is expected to rule on a remedial plan for the Mississippi State Department of Mental Health in the near future. On Monday, he heard from Hogan and lawyers representing the state of Mississippi and the United States Department of Justice, which successfully sued the state two years ago when Reeves ruled Mississippi was in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Hogan and lawyers representing the federal government have argued that an independent “monitor” should be appointed to oversee the state’s progress in complying with the ADA.

Hogan said the position would be “the eyes and ears of the court” and act like a referee, an unbiased individual who will make sure rules are enforced. The state adamantly opposes a monitor, saying the department has made changes and that the position is unneeded.

He also recommended that



Michael Hogan, a “special master” appointed to help craft and oversee changes in the Mississippi’s mental-health system, exits the federal courthouse in Jackson, Miss., following a hearing on updates about the status of the lawsuit over mental health services in the state, Monday, July 12, 2021. Hogan reviewed his findings in court before U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves, federal attorneys and attorneys for the state.
AP PHOTO/ROGELIO V. SOLIS

the state conduct a survey of a sampling of 100 to 200 patients in the state’s mental health care system to get feedback on services.

Litigation over the way Mississippi cares for people with mental illness has been underway for years now. The federal government issued a letter in 2011 saying Mississippi had done too little to provide mental health services outside mental hospitals. The Justice Department sued the state in 2016.

Federal attorneys said during the 2019 trial that mentally ill people were being held in jails because crisis teams didn’t respond. They said people had been forced to live far from their families because mental health services weren’t available in their hometowns. They also said people made repeat trips to Mississippi mental hospitals because there was no effective planning for them to make a transition to community services, and the most intensive kinds of services weren’t being made available.

Federal attorneys said Monday that they believe Mississippi is still in violation of the ADA and that they’ve seen no evidence otherwise.

James Shelson, a lawyer representing the state, said Mississippi has enacted mobile crisis teams and crisis stabilization units, or facilities that provide intensive short-term mental health care for those experiencing acute psychiatric crises. The state also offers Programs for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT), or services to help patients transition between levels of care or to avoid the

need for hospitalization, as well as supportive housing and peer support services.

“We heard your honor two years ago, we didn’t sit around and do nothing,” he told Judge Reeves.


Deena Fox, a trial attorney in the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice, said those services need to be expanded and that there need to be metrics in place to ensure they are working. For example, the state should require that professionals respond to a person in crisis within one hour after receiving a call in an urban area, and within two hours in a rural area.

She said it’s not of help if there is a crisis team in place in an area, but they respond to calls too late or defer to law enforcement.

Fox said more than 1,000 people need access to supportive housing in Mississippi, and that the state should be working to accommodate as many of those individuals as possible. Having a place to live, a job and income is key to preventing hospitalizations, she said. However, the state’s current plan calls for expanding supportive housing by fewer than 100 units, according to Fox.

“The state’s proposal is to keep the status quo, which is not sufficient,” Fox said.

Leah Willingham is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.



I GOT MY COVID-19 VACCINE

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine adds one more layer of protection.

P R E S E R V E D

Embracing Silence

By Shewanda Riley
Columnist



Is it possible to reach a point in a relationship when the best communication is silence? As a child, I used to get teased for talking too much. As a former radio broadcaster, I've had to break myself out of the habit of thinking that dead air (silence) is a bad thing. I'm rethinking the idea that silence is a bad thing. [HYPERLINK "http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=31&chapter=3&verse=28&version=65&context=verse"](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=31&chapter=3&verse=28&version=65&context=verse) Lamentations 3:28 encourages that "When life is heavy and hard to take, go off by yourself. Enter the silence. Bow in prayer. Don't ask questions: Wait for hope to appear...." For example, when some

get under stress, they get silent and retreat.... others talk out their stress. In relationships, men "go into their caves" according to author John Gray so they can work through those issues that most concern them. However, women don't see the silence as good, but panic because it seems like silence is a sign of something wrong. Women interpret the silence and pulling away as the man losing interest. In actuality, it's really a sign that he's reached a satisfying level of intimacy and connection and is now ready to reestablish his independence. It seems like Dr. Phil-ish psycho babble but in these cases silence can be a time for refreshing and regrouping. Even Ecclesiastes 3:7 reminds us that there is "a time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak..."

Job is a biblical example of someone who struggled with silence. Silence was a sign that God was getting ready to move on his behalf. In frustration, Job lamented in Job 21:4, "It's not you I'm complaining to—it's God. Is it any wonder I'm getting fed up with his silence?" God eventually answered all of his questions...and restored his fortunes. In times of silence what do you do? I don't mean when you're mad at someone and give them the silent treatment. Do you embrace silence or fight the intimacy that it promises? When you fight silence, you fight sometimes against the thing that can best help you. For some of us, silence is where we do our best work. It's in the quiet moments early in the morning or late at night that we feel the most creative. Silence isn't about disconnect-

ing; it's about reconnecting to the true source of healing and wisdom. For many of us, we resist silence in our relationships with others and even with God. Silence can be scary because of what it may reveal about us and others. Because of the isolation of the Covid-19 pandemic, I've had to fight through the moments of silence because they made me panicky. Eventually, I embraced those moments... and used them to draw closer to God. It was a lot of work but these experiences taught me that silence can be a good thing....once we stop fighting it...and embrace it. *Shewanda Riley is the author of the Essence best-seller "Love Hangover: Moving from Pain to Purpose after a Relationship Ends." She may be reached at lovehangover@juno.com.*

Believe not every Spirit

By Pastor Simeon R. Green III
Special to The Mississippi Link



Earthly systems always offer bondage. What do they worship? Anytime people get in a false system, they worship false things. Have you ever been in any place where they have the covenant written out and posted on the wall? What does Habakkuk say about the vision? Habakkuk 2:2-3 says that the Lord told Habakkuk to "write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie." In other words, if we do not understand it today, think on it for a while, and it will speak to us. We will not find the truth, the revelation about God, if we worship false things and do not worship what is true. There is something in every person that wants to worship. When I was living in sin, I worshipped under the devil's spirit. You did too. There are spirits in all religions. First John 4:1 warns, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world." There are spirits that will take hold of our spirits. I have

seen people cry when, if they knew there was not any truth in what they were crying about, they would have stopped their crying quickly. I have seen people shout more over grandma and grandpa then they shouted over Jesus. In a false system, people worship false things. In Matthew, Chapter 23, we find that some Scribes and Pharisees wanted to sit in Moses' seat. They wanted to use their own authority in high places. James got after people when he preached that one should not say to a brother, "Come and sit here" because he is rich, but to the poor, they say, "Go sit down over there." In God's Church, there are no big I's and little You's. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees in Matthew, Chapter 23, because they flaunted their titles and their education. They wanted to be called "Rabbi" by all the people. Education is wonderful, but without God, it is dangerous. They wanted to put themselves up on a pinnacle. Jesus reprovved the Pharisees because they put people in bondage. We cannot worship God with dead things. We must come alive in Jesus Christ. *Rev. Simeon R. Green III is pastor of Joynes Road Church of God, 31 Joynes Road, Hampton VA 23669. He is a member of the National Association of Evangelism Church of God, Anderson, Ind.*

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The Surfside condo collapse is sad and filled with suffering

By James B. Ewers Jr.
*President Emeritus
Teen Mentoring Committee of Ohio*



There are times in life when suffering comes suddenly. There are no knocks on the door or tele-

phones ringing to warn you. We wake up sometimes with our day already planned. If you are retired, your plans are flexible and fluid.

The residents of Champlain Towers South thought it would be a normal day on June 24th. Why would they think otherwise? There were no warning signs.

Thursday, June 24, 2021, was a day that would change their lives and the lives of their families forever. A part of Champlain Towers South collapsed leaving behind death and destruction.

According to reports the death toll is at 90 with 31 people unaccounted for now.

By all measures, this catastrophe has shaken the state of Florida in particular, and America as a whole. Pictures

shown on television provided a gruesome and grim scene as family belongings were trapped between bricks and mortar.

The scene could be compared to the destruction we saw during 9/11.

Miami-Dade County mayor Daniella Levine Cava said, “The magnitude of this tragedy is growing each and every day, It’s an aching hole in the center of this close-knit family.”

The pain experienced by the loved ones of the deceased will be forever etched in their hearts and minds. A victim as young as 5 years old has been found. This was someone’s child and grandchild.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology have now more than 200 pieces of evidence as they begin a review of what caused the building to come down in shambles.

Prior to the collapse, there were citizen complaints about the problems at the condo. These claims arguably went unanswered and unresolved.

Now after the collapse, re-

ports have surfaced showing structural damage. At the inquiry desk is why officials put them aside and by their non-actions deemed them not important.

Building shortcomings often start out as a splinter in your finger and end up being a broken bone in your body. This analogy is what occurred in Surfside.

Now, city officials are going to condos along Miami Beach and making inspections. With these inspections, developers are being given deadlines in order to make improvements.

Volusia County chair, Jeff Brower said, “We inspect bridges every two years and yet a high-rise can go up right on the coast and it’s inspected at the time it is built and never again. It’s kind of a wake-up call, and some of the pictures I have seen of our own structures are scary.”

Scary is what happens when buildings are decaying yet the belief is that they will last forever. The heartbreak in this is that now leaders are paying attention.

Do edifices like Champlain Towers South come down because of poor materials, cutting corners and inferior workmanship? I think it is a combination of factors.

The evidence gathered will surely tell us what happened in Surfside. Hopefully, the findings will be heeded, and better building construction will happen, and inspections will become more frequent.

Already in North Miami Beach, Crestview Towers which is 50 years old has told its residents that repairs will be forthcoming, and they will have to leave. Of course, these repairs are happening before another tragedy occurs. This is the type of futuristic foresight that will be needed.

Buildings are fragile, but our lives are infinitely more fragile. Buildings can be replaced over time, but we only have one life, and they are precious.

Prayers go up for the victims at Champlain Towers South. Families, hold on to His unchanging Hand. He will not let go of your hands.

The qualified immunity of whiteness

By Oscar H. Blayton
Pres. Black Chamber of Commerce



The systemic racism in the American criminal justice system is obvious to all who care to see it. And one of its worst abuses is the policy of qualified immunity. It is not enforcement that is meant to be protected by qualified immunity; it is whiteness.

While there are tendrils of qualified immunity stretching back to the days just after the Civil War, this policy cemented a wall of protection around police forces across the county by the U.S. Supreme Court during the civil rights era.

In 1956, segregated bus terminals were held to be unconstitutional. And in 1961, 15 Black and white priests, organized by the Rev. Robert L. Pierson, were arrested by local police when they entered a “whites only” section of a bus terminal in Jackson, Miss. A local judge sentenced each of the priests to the maximum four months in jail, plus a \$200 fine. The charges later were dismissed on appeal. The priests then sued police Capt. J.L. Ray and two other officers under Section 1983 of the Ku Klux Klan Act for violating their constitutional rights through unlawful arrest. The suit against the police officers made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court and was decided in 1967 in the case known as *Pierson v. Ray*.

Chief Justice Earl Warren stunned civil rights advocates when he wrote the opinion of the Supreme Court ruling against the priests and handing down a decision that held that while police do not have absolute and unqualified immunity, they should not be held liable when acting in good faith.

Although Chief Justice Warren had come to be viewed as a champion of civil rights for all Americans, his opinion in *Pierson v. Ray* poisoned the well of law enforcement for people of color from that day through the present.

In this case, the racist police officers had argued that they only arrested the priests to prevent violence, while the priests argued that the officers’ intent was solely to enforce segregation in violation of the priests’ constitutional rights.

Given the history of fire hoses, dogs and batons being used to abuse African Americans of their civil rights, it is incredible that the high court could have found any credence in the version of facts presented by the racist police officers, but it did.

“Good faith” has become the “get-out-of-jail-free card” for so many vicious police officers who solemnly claim that they feared for their safety, or thought it was the best course of action to take at the time – as they stand over the body of a slain person of color.

The lack of justice in the policy of qualified immunity is glaringly obvious when a police officer of color is called to account for injuring or killing a white person.

Prior to the conviction of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin for the horrendous murder of George Floyd in broad daylight and caught on

cell phone video, the only Minnesota police officer to be found guilty of an on-duty killing was Mohamed Noor. Noor, who is Black, fatally shot Justine Damond, a 40-year-old white woman who had called 911 to report a possible assault of a woman in an alley behind her house. Noor testified at trial that when he and his partner arrived at the scene, he heard a loud bang against their squad car and his partner yelled, “Oh, Jesus!” Noor then testified that he then saw a blonde woman in a pink T-shirt raise her right arm outside the squad car’s open window and he then made a split-second decision to use his gun to protect his partner’s life.

No qualified immunity here. The prosecutor made a point of the victim’s blondness when arguing his case to the jury, and Mohamed Noor was sentenced to 121/2 years in prison.

In 2017, Marksville, La., Deputy Marshal Derrick Stafford was convicted in the death of a 6-year-old white boy. The boy, who was a passenger in his father’s car, was fatally shot after the father, Christopher Few, led officers on a two-mile chase.

Stafford said he shot at the car because he feared Few was going to back up and hit Deputy Norris Greenhouse Jr. with his vehicle. Stafford said Greenhouse had stumbled and fallen to the ground as he tried to back away from Few’s car.

No immunity here. Stafford was sentenced to 40 years in prison.

White fear of Blackness is a “get-out-of-jail-free card” not only for the police, but for civilians as well. In 2013, 28-year-old George Zimmerman was acquitted of murdering Trayvon Martin because the armed Zimmerman said he feared for his life during an altercation he initiated with the 17-year-old unarmed African American high school student who he had followed through his Florida neighborhood and accosted for no valid reason.

The policy of qualified immunity is a means of showing empathy for white people that is not afforded to people of color. This leads to lesser sentences for crimes or findings of innocence where there is palpable guilt.

The operative qualification in qualified immunity is whiteness. There is no other way to account for the difference in outcomes when America’s criminal justice system weighs the actions of people of color as opposed to those of white people. While the base of qualified immunity is a floor that allows for people acting in good faith to be allowed some degree of grace, its bumpy sub-flooring is constructed of a racist bias that sees people of color as less deserving of grace.

Systemic racism has rendered the American judicial system grotesquely out of balance. Laws have been interpreted to serve an oppressive segment of our society at the expense of the oppressed. This systemic racism must be dismantled brick by brick, and the brick to start with is qualified immunity.

Oscar H. Blayton is a former Marine Corps combat pilot and human rights activist who practices law in Virginia. His earlier commentaries may be found at <https://oblayton1.medium.com/>

Fighting for Freedom, One Person at a Time

By Dr. John Warren
*San Diego Voice and
Viewpoint/NNPA Member*



Now that the Fourth of July is over and we have all been reminded of what Frederick Douglass said and did, the cookouts are behind us, but so is the memory of the White Nationalists marching in the streets of Philadelphia with flags and faces covered. Let us now come off of recess and dig in for the battle ahead. Let us not be like the Summer Patriot and Sunshine Soldier that Thomas Payne

wrote about during the Revolutionary War. In his publication, “The Crisis”, he said that such would soon vanish from the battle, but those that endured until the end would desire the love of all mankind. In other words, some people will only participate in a fight when things are sunny and good as opposed to those who will fight through storms and hardships.

The question on so many of our minds is how do we fight and when and where do we fight? The answer: Right where you stand, and right now. You fight right where you stand by moving beyond waiting for someone to tell you what to do, and looking at what needs to be done. For example, we have a recall election coming up in less than 60 days. Let’s arm ourselves with information about what is at stake and how it will affect each of us.

Newsom may not be the best Governor, according to some, but he is better than the alternatives of Kevin Faulconer, John Cox and Catlyn Jenner. We have already seen what Republican governors have done to the rest of the country with voter suppression and support of Trump’s Big Lie. If a Republican is on a ballot, then we must act to vote against them and what they represent. Democrats are not our answer, but they are better than the alternative.

Since the United States Supreme Court has finished gut-

ting the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Senate refuses to act in allowing our Constitutional form of government to work, then we must mobilize in every state where there is a Republican on the ballot for Governor, U.S. Senate, or House of Representative seats; to find and support those people running against them and willing to support voting rights, kill the Filibuster in the U.S. Senate and vote people into the Congress that will allow victories for our people in the 2022 elections.

The reality is that there are more of us than them, but they have learned that historically we don’t vote. We must repeat the voter turnout of the 2020 election, in spite of the new voter suppression laws and efforts to purge election rolls. We must start now to re-register people to vote, join the Black Votes Matter (BVM) movement in every state where we live or have family.

Just as our forefathers didn’t quit the fight for civil rights and equality because

of the KKK or the hatred of segregationists, so we must not be deterred by marching against White Nationalists, no matter how they are armed and dressed. We must neither ignore nor be discouraged by racist White state governors doing everything in their power to make sure we don’t vote again in the numbers we produced in 2020.

We must not become apathetic if we live in a blue state. We have already seen the plans to use the results of the 2020 Census to change electoral districts, drawing new boundaries that weaken the power of our collective vote.

When we decide to fight, one person at a time, regardless of where we live, we give new meaning to the saying, “There is no power like that of an idea whose time has come.” Our time has come, if you get involved. If you don’t know what to do, then ask somebody. Get armed with information and then get active where you stand.

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9. Promotion
11. Jewish scribe
12. Groom
13. Adze
14. Encounter
15. Scale note
17. North northeast
18. Shellfish
20. Emitted light
22. Winter sport
23. __evated railway
24. Female parent
27. Left
29. Adult insect
31. Offers
32. Sporty car brand
33. Nip off
34. Valley

1. What children learn
2. Primary color
3. Entice
4. Goof
5. Put
6. Gas
7. Main side of building
8. Fib
10. Writer's name on an article (hyph.)
16. Famous female pilot Earhart
18. Caesar's 51
19. Palladium (abbr.)
20. Bundle of yarn
21. Sanskrit
22. Compass point
24. Mangle
25. Giant
26. Groan
28. Cooking measurement
30. Microgram

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Hint: Quote by Bob Marley

[illegible]
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The challenge is to fill every row across, every column down, and every 3x3 box with the digits 1 through 9. Each 1 through 9 digit must appear only once in each row across, each column down, and each 3x3 box.

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WHEN IT HITS YOU, YOU FEEL
KIVX GT IGTU MBE MBE CVVY
NO PAIN
XB LWGX

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President Harris Hints at Filibuster Remedy



By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Contributor

While President Joe Biden asserted his discontent with voter suppression laws making their way through legislatures in GOP-led states, Vice President Kamala Harris dropped a bombshell regarding potential plans to sidestep the oppressive filibuster and push through laws to protect the ballot box.

During a speech in Philadelphia on Tuesday, July 13, the President made a “moral case” for voting rights and pledged to do whatever he could to protect ballot access as American votes face “authoritarian and anti-American restrictions.”

At the same time, Vice President Harris hinted to NPR that it might be time to consider unconventional measures to stop Republicans from restricting access and denying certain citizens the right to vote.

The network noted that the Vice President intimated that she had started talks with senators about a voting-rights exception to the filibuster. “I believe that of all the issues that the United States Congress can take up, the right to vote is the right that unlocks all the other things,” Harris told NPR. “And for that reason, it should be one of its highest priorities.”

When pressed on whether she supported a carveout to the filibuster for voting rights proposed by Congressman James Clyburn (D-S.C.), Harris said, “I don’t mean this in any offense, but I’m not going to negotiate this way. But I’m certainly having conversations with folks.”

Most legislative bills need at least 60 votes to pass the evenly divided U.S. Senate, meaning at least 10 Republicans must support the measure. The GOP almost unanimously has rejected bills that would make it easier for all Americans to vote, particularly seniors and minorities. If Democrats hope to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act or the For the People Act, abolishing the filibuster rule of 60 votes appears

necessary. Or, as Vice President Harris hinted, a way to subvert the filibuster.

In Philadelphia, the President lashed out at Republicans. “Some things in America should be simple and straightforward. Perhaps the most important of those things, the most fundamental of those things, is the right to vote,” the President insisted.

“The right to vote freely... The right to vote fairly, the right to have your vote counted. The Democratic threshold is liberty. With it, anything is possible. Without it, nothing, nothing.” “This is a test of our time,” Biden continued.

He called the suppression laws in places like Texas and Georgia the most significant test of American democracy since the Civil War. “That’s not hyperbole — since the Civil War,” the President remarked.

“The Confederates back then never breached the Capitol as insurrectionists did on Jan. 6. I’m not saying this to alarm you. I’m saying this because you should be alarmed.” The President explained that things could and should be different. “We have the means — we just need the will. The will to save and strengthen our democracy,” Biden exclaimed.

“We have to prepare now. As I said time and again, no matter what, you can never stop the American people from voting. They will decide, and the power must always be with the people. That’s why just like we did in 2020. We have to prepare for 2022.”

The President concluded that the push for voting rights legislation must continue.

“[The For the People Act] would help end voter suppression in states. Get dark money out of politics. Give voice to people. Create fair district maps and end partisan political gerrymandering,” the President argued.

“As soon as Congress passes the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, I will sign it and let the whole world see it. That will be an important moment.”

President Biden Demands Freedom for Cuban Citizens

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Contributor

President Joe Biden, on Monday, July 12, issued a clarion call for freedom in Cuba.

“We stand with the Cuban people and their clarion call for freedom and relief from the tragic grip of the pandemic and from the decades of repression and economic suffering to which they have been subjected by Cuba’s authoritarian regime,” President Biden asserted in a statement issued by the White House.

“The Cuban people are bravely asserting fundamental and universal rights. Those rights, including the right to peaceful protest and the right to freely determine their own future, must be respected.

“The United States calls on the Cuban regime to hear their people and serve their needs at this vital moment rather than enriching themselves,” President



President Joe Biden listens during a G7 Leaders’ virtual meeting on Friday, Feb. 19, 2021, in the White House Situation Room. OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY ADAM SCHULTZ

Biden concluded.

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel blamed American trade sanctions for creating “economic misery” in Cuba.

“The order to combat has been given. Revolutionaries need to

be on the streets,” the island nation’s president declared.

The tens of thousands of residents in Cuba protested the lack of food, medicine, and supplies in the country, much of it attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic

and sanctions placed on the nation by the United States.

The protestors chanted “freedom,” and Reuters News Service reported that most called on President Diaz-Canel to step down.

PA Supreme Court Judge Rips Cosby Prosecutor: ‘He Broke the Rules’



By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Contributor

While social media and many who still have not understood the Pennsylvania Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Bill Cosby’s conviction continue to mislabel their decision as a “technicality,” the chief justice remarkably refuted those claims. He also blasted Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin Steele, saying the case was a case of “bait and switch.”

“[Steele] didn’t just break the deal [Cosby had with former prosecutor Bruce Castor], he broke the rules,” Chief Justice Max Baer told Philadelphia’s local ABC News affiliate. “What we said is we’re not gonna let the commonwealth, the state through the district attorneys to engage in that kind of reprehensible bait and switch,” Justice Baer asserted.

He emphasized that the court’s decision wasn’t to protect Cosby but the “13 million Pennsylvanians against that kind of conduct.” Justice Baer concluded that it wasn’t the

Supreme Court’s duty to find guilt or innocence on the part of Cosby. However, what the court did find was an illegal prosecution on the part of Steele. “What we found was what the state did was inappropriate,” Justice Baer insisted.

Cosby won his freedom on June 29 after spending nearly three years in prison after a 2018 conviction of indecent aggravated assault.

The comedian and his team have since argued with those who have called the decision by the Supreme Court to overturn his conviction a technicality. “You’re sitting in a room trying to explain something, and there is a knock on the door. You say, ‘who is it?’ [The response is], ‘It is the truth.’ So, people start jumping out of the window,” Cosby told the Black Press in his only extensive interview since his release.

“The court’s decision was not a technicality,” said Cosby. “These people sound like they haven’t read what the judges have written. It’s not a techni-

cality. These [detractors] don’t want to know anything. It’s like the woman who said she knows five women that I drugged and raped. Well, where are they?”

Steele responded to Justice Baer.

Despite former prosecutor Bruce Castor providing written affidavits directly to Steele and offering his testimony in pre-trial hearings, Steele incredulously claimed he didn’t know a previous deal existed between the commonwealth and Cosby.

“To be very clear, prosecutors, in this case, did not believe there was an agreement not to prosecute or immunity for the defendant at the time we moved forward on the case, and we do not believe it now,” Steele told ABC News. “If we had believed there was an agreement or immunity, we would not have moved forward in our attempt to bring Cosby to justice.”

Meanwhile, Cosby has already begun plans to resume his stand-up career. He plans to appear at an autism event in August to entertain those supporting that cause.

The “I-Spy” legend is also taking part in a documentary about his life and trials produced by former ABC Good Morning America producer Michelle Major. “There’s a big smile on my face,” Cosby insisted. “A big smile on my face because I was there. I know what happened, and I’m watching and hearing these fascists and Nazis, and I watched them really come out of the woodworks as termites. The infestation of when [former President] Donald Trump came through, and they just let it all hang out. That’s who they are. That’s who their ancestors are. They want their ancestors to be people who came here for religious freedoms after being persecuted — but by whom? Things weren’t right in dear old England.

“They got on these ships, but you were criminals, and people signed on to look after wealthy people’s findings. Christopher Columbus got as lost as a White man can get, but got off the boat, took a flag, and said he would name this and so forth and so on.”

College Hill Church Awards R.E. Willis scholarships

By Leon Williams
Contributing Writer

As the College Hill family prepares to greet a new pastor on July 18, four graduating seniors were awarded cash scholarships during the regular 10:00 a.m. worship service on the preceding Sunday, July 11.

The awards were presented by Jackie Hampton, a member of the R. E. Willis scholarship committee who stated that this was the 21st year in which Mission Circle # 7 has spear-headed the awarding of the annual scholarships. The late Pastor, Dr. R. E. Willis, who pastored the west Jackson church from 1965-1989, was a strong believer in the power of education and loved seeing students excel. It is in his honor the scholarships are named.

Since inception, the scholarships have been available to graduating high school seniors that are members of College Hill. Winners are selected based on grade point average, ACT scores, involvement in school, church and community activities, a written essay and letters of recommendation.

Leah Essence Clark, a graduate of Saint Joseph Catholic School, received the first place award of \$1,200.00. She plans to attend Xavier University of Louisiana and major in Mass Communications.

Carter Isaiah Barnes, a graduate of Murrah High School, received the second place award of \$1,000.00. He plans to attend Hinds Community College and major in Computer Science/Engineering.

Emiyah Seymone Williams, a graduate of Murrah High School,



Rev. Peoples congratulates Leah Clark
PHOTO BY KELVIN HAYES



Rev. Peoples congratulates Carter Barnes
PHOTO BY KELVIN HAYES



Rev. Peoples congratulates Emiyah Williams
PHOTO BY KELVIN HAYES



Rev. Peoples congratulates JaMiraca Hicks
PHOTO BY KELVIN HAYES



(L-R) Clark, Williams, Hampton, Barnes, Hicks
PHOTO BY DENISE GRIFFIN

received the third place award of \$800.00. She plans to attend Clark Atlanta University and major in Business Management.

JaMiraca Charnell Hicks, a graduate of Wingfield High School received an award of \$500.00. She plans to attend Jackson State university and major in Biology Pre-Med.

Hampton commended each of

the awardees and stated on behalf of the church, that she was looking forward to them continuing to excel and make their church family proud.

Assisting Hampton in presenting the award was Rev. Calvin Peoples, an associate minister of College Hill. Peoples was one of two ministers who brought the message to the College Hill

Family throughout the last few months while the church was without a pastor, due to the retirement of Rev. Michael T. Williams. Peoples thanked the College Hill family for the opportunity to serve. He delivered the message entitled “We Are One,” on Sunday reminding the church family that the body of the church must work together ‘as one’ in

order to get the maximum potential in serving the community and bringing glory to God.

Peoples praised Associate Minister William Wheeler for bringing the message on alternate Sundays throughout the time the church was without a pastor.

Rev. Chauncy L. Jordan, Sr. of Clinton, Mississippi will become the new pastor of College Hill

on July 18, 2021 and the church family looks forward to his leadership.

College Hill resumed in-person worship service on May 30 with a limited number of attendees allowed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Masks are required throughout the service. The church is located at 1600 Florence Avenue.

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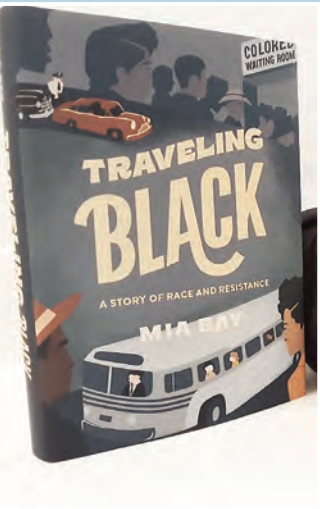
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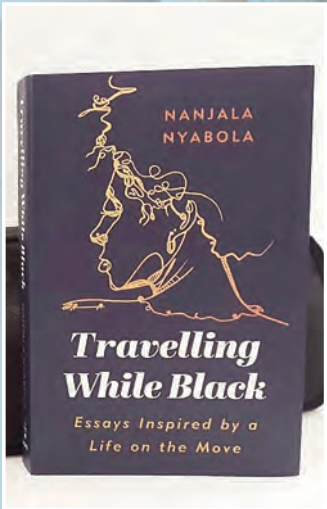


BOOK REVIEW:



TRAVELING BLACK: A STORY OF RACE AND RESISTANCE

BY MIA BAY
C.2021, BELKNAP, HARVARD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
\$35.00 • 391 PAGES



TRAVELLING WHILE BLACK: ESSAYS INSPIRED BY A LIFE ON THE MOVE

BY NANJALA NYABOLA
C.2020, HURST
\$19.95 • 238 PAGES

Mississippi Link Newswire

You’ve always wanted to do it. You just wanted to go. You’d hop in a car or van, no GPS or map, no real itinerary, no destination in mind. You’d point your headlights in some direction and drive until you got where you felt like you needed to be. No timetable, no worries... and no chance for your ancestors to do that very thing. So this summer, honor their wanderlust by seizing yours, and read these two similarly-titled new books...

First, the history: it had to

start somewhere – but where? You can imagine how Black mobility was affected by slavery but how and why did it continue? Surely, it wasn’t arbitrary, not just “no, you can’t travel here,” so how did restrictions on Black mobility happen, how did African Americans fight the system, and why does it matter now? In “Traveling Black,” (Belknap, Harvard University Press, \$35.00), author Mia Bay answers these questions, starting back when travel was largely of the horse-and-wagon type.

Starting with Plessy v. Ferguson, Bay explains how segregation in travel began, and how it spread along roads and rails and then spread to accommodations, and the uncertainty of what might await a traveler along the journey. Bay separates each mode of travel to examine how Jim Crow laws affected a Black traveler in different manners, and she looks at the ways in which travel was sometimes used as activism. Now, though, you’re free to travel – not just in the U.S., but around the world, if you want.

In “Travelling While Black” (Hurst, \$19.95), author Nanjala Nyabola shares some stories of her travels, and how her skin color matters when she’s on the move. Indeed, what’s it like to travel as a Black woman, when guidebooks are not written with a Black woman in mind? How can you draw a line from African Americans on the road in the Old Days, to travel now? And now that you can travel, what does it tell you about yourself? These are just a few things

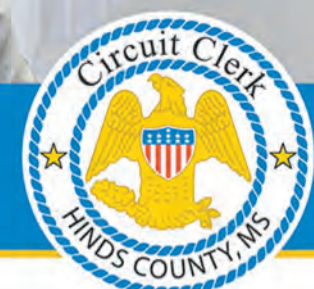
Nyabola ponders as she takes readers from Haiti to the Far East, Mexico, Africa, Europe, and the American South. She muses about suffering, the need for literature in Black culture, identity, asylum, and the meaning of home. This is the kind of book you’ll want to read when you want to go somewhere but you’re stuck at home for whatever reason. Nyabola goes to the popular places but she also travels to spots that are generally sought by adventurers. This gives readers a sense of travelogue

with a hint of the unusual; her musings on the places she goes make this a book you won’t want to put down. Her observations will make you glad she took you along with her. If these don’t quite fit what you’re looking for, there are lots of other books you’ll find at your local library or bookstore. As always, be sure to ask your librarian or bookseller for help; they’re pros at finding what you’re looking for. Do it today. Just go.



ZACK WALLACE

Hinds County Circuit Clerk



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Hinds County School District Weekly Update

ENGAGING-EMPOWERING-ENSURING-EXCELLENCE

Hinds County School District Host Groundbreaking Ceremony for New Carver Middle School Gym and Classrooms



New Carver Middle School Gym and Classrooms



Dr William Sellers, Assistant Superintendent served as Master of Ceremony.



Community members and school officials.



Isla Tullios, Honorable Mayor, City of Raymond addressed the benefits of the additions to the community.



Dr. Linda Laws, Board President addressed the benefits of the new additions to student success.



Dr. Delesicia Martin, Superintendent, thanked the community, board, school staff, parents, and construction teams for their dedication and input to this building project.



Mr. Bobby Taylor, Principal addressed the benefits of the additional classrooms.



G.G. Ferguson, AIA & President / Ferguson & Associates Architects addressed the building phases of the project.



Pictured L-R: HCS D Board Members Rod Jones; Kayla Banger; Dr. Linda Laws, President; Carolyn Samuel; and Robbie Anderson



Pictured L-R: Bridget Smith, Alderwomen; Lou Anne Askew, Alderwomen and Honorable Mayor Isla Tullios of Raymond.



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Dr. Pamela Gary, CEO

HOLMES COUNTY
BOARD OF
SUPERVISORS

JULY 21, 2021
9AM - 12PM

OFFERING
RECRUITMENT
BONUS
PROGRAM!