

**HISTORY HAS ITS EYES ON US**

"May the leaders with privilege do more listening than speaking right now. May the leaders with the most power do more."

By Lora Wondolowski – 5

SJC STATEMENT ON BIAS AND INEQUALITY

"As judges, we must look afresh at what we are doing, or failing to do, to root out any conscious and unconscious bias in our courtrooms; to ensure that the justice provided to African-Americans is the same that is provided to white Americans; to create in our courtrooms, our corner of the world, a place where all are truly equal."

Chief Justice Ralph D. Gants et al – 10

MASC STATEMENT ON ANTI-RACISM

"We must ensure our own school culture and that of every district in the Commonwealth is anti-racist, that acknowledges that all lives cannot matter until black lives matter."

By Denise Hurst & Jacob Oliveira – 10

NACCHO STATEMENT ON RACISM

"Racially Driven Violence Against Black Americans Is a Public Health Issue."

By NACCHO – 11

SAY THEIR NAMES

"He got killed by the police for writing graffiti. There are so many names. It is really painful. We have to bring attention to injustice and racism. We have to keep striving and moving forward." –Wane One

By Britt Ruhe – 12

HAPPY BIRTHDAY HEAD START

"On a national level, other people who have attended Head Start include comedian Chris Rock; athlete Shaquille O'Neal; Anna Maria Chavez, the first Latina CEO of Girls Scouts of America; and the list goes on and on. A little Head Start goes a long way."

By Nicole Blais – 17

A MESSAGE TO 2020 GRADUATES

"This graduation year will be historic because of how you, the graduates, handled it. The world will be watching. The perseverance and resilience shown will not go unnoticed."

By Patricia Spradley – 19

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When we put "crazy," emotionally unstable, power-seeking/loving, insecure people in uniform, NO amount of training will fix the problem. These people need to do some other kind of work."

By Emurriel Holloway – 25

YEARNING TO BREATHE FREE

"Corrupt police officers have taken the breath of innocent men and women, and police officers who remain silent amid the brutality of our citizens smother the breath of justice."

By Rev. Dr. Atu White – 26

STRONG BLACK WOMEN, THE MYTH VERSUS REALITY

"The strong Black woman myth exists because we have no other choice. We must protect each other simply because, if not then who will?"

By Latoya Bosworth, PhD – 29

VOTE ★ ★ ★ **VOTE** ★ ★ ★ **VOTE** ★ ★ ★

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE ON

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

DEMONSTRATE BUT THEN VOTE!

By Frederick A. Hurst



Those who might have anticipated a follow up to my June article titled the "Clapprood Affair" will be a bit disappointed by my decision to focus my current "My Point of View" on the positive events that followed the city of Springfield officials' foolish decision to reinstate five indicted officers to the police force who had been suspended without pay for their involvement in the assault on Black patrons at the Nathan Bill restaurant by five White officers.

Although there have been several very significant recent marches against police behavior, my focus herein is on the gathering that took place at the Nathan Bill restaurant property on Island Pond Road that culminated in a relatively short march from there to the Nathan Bill park on Plumtree Road. My reason for focusing on this particular march was because it involved local events that modeled national events with the exception that none of the victims died, although one could have.

I deliberately assumed a low profile as I watched from the periphery, listened to the various speakers and mar-

veled at the diversity of the incredibly peaceful but determined crowd. I felt a strange sense of pride in people from Springfield and around the region, who mirrored the mix and the outrage of crowds around the country who were sending the loud message to authorities that they

To the contrary, it appears by his recent behavior that Mayor Sarno is trying to pit Black folks against Black folks. It's an old, worn out White trick that he seems to think he invented. What he doesn't know is that Black folks picked up on that trick long ago and are sophisticated enough to defend against it, not by fighting each other but by foiling his bad intentions in ways that he can't even imagine.

would no longer tolerate unjustified police violence against Black folks. It was a sight to see.

It was a truly disciplined crowd of several hundred people. The vast majority practiced social distancing, wore masks and listened intently to short but insightful

speeches by Tara Parish from the Pioneer Valley Project, NAACP President Bishop Talbert Swan, as well as Springfield City Council President Justin Hurst and City Councilor Tracey Whitfield, all of whom co-sponsored the event.

Other speakers included City Councilors Marcus Williams, Adam Gomez and Victor Davila, State Senator Eric Lesser and none other than Congressman and senatorial candidate Joseph P. Kennedy III who, as he addressed the

continues to page 24

VOTE ★ ★ ★ **VOTE** ★ ★ ★ **VOTE** ★ ★ ★

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE ON

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

FEATURE ARTICLE

Art As Protest: Then and Now

By Yvonne Mendez



Yvonne Mendez is the Director of Education & Engagement at the UMass Fine Arts Center. She produces events for the Valley Jazz Network, and also works with the Springfield Jazz and Roots Festival.

Art can mirror real life in a way that has great impact, and moves people to action. During the civil rights movement Harry Belafonte, who had built a reputation as a popular singer/musician/actor used his resources to help support the movement. As an actor, along with others like Sidney Poitier and Dorothy Dandridge, he helped push forward the image of blacks as real human beings. On the literary front there was Langston Hughes, Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin and others, reflecting the black experience in a time when blacks were considered subhuman. Max Roach's *We Insist Freedom Suite* is a remarkable and historic recording. Nina Simone's music was an anthem for freedom and justice. The most obvious song is *Mississippi Goddam*, written in response to the murder of Medgar Evers and the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. It is a fierce accounting of racism, violence and economic inequality in America.

In South Africa, leaders like Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela, were also pioneering musicians. Makeba's song *N'Kosi Sikeleli Africa* was the anti-apartheid anthem. Fela Kuti was unmistakably a fierce rebel and freedom fighter. His songs *Water No Enemy* and *Zombie* speak to the appalling injustices of poverty, government corruption, corporate greed and more.

There are so many others I can name. Public Enemy's *Fight The Power*; Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*; James Brown *I'm Black and I'm Proud*; and Obama's campaign song, Sam Cooke's *Change Gonna Come*, from 1963. This struggle has been going on for some time.

So who are the contemporary equivalents?

Obvious artists like Kendrick



*Photo by Shawn Hoke
Mural: Damien Mitchell's Nina Simone, Bushwick, Brooklyn
From Creative Commons*

Lamar, whose appearance at the 2016 Grammys featured men in chains and prison cells, just to be invited to perform again in 2018. Childish Gambino's *This Is America* covers the historical underpinnings and the current color of racism and his song was used recently during the George Floyd protests. John Legend is a household name in music and a vocal civil rights advocate. Talib Kweli has been an activist for many years, and now is very active in Black Lives Matter, working alongside organizers and marching in protests.

Newcomers with a new style include Noname, a young rap musician who started a book club and changed her concerts to book club meetings, promoting social change through literacy. Check out her song *Blaxploitation*. And Tobe Nwigwe's music reflects his life in urban Houston, the violence and drugs, while also honoring black people, our food, our music, and the hope that we carry along with the burdens. His music is very spiri-

tual and uplifting.

These are uncertain times, where democracy is under attack, and violence and injustice against black and brown people is not only con-

done, but encouraged. It seems we are mobilized again, to demand change. And music and art will always be at the center of the struggle.



Photo by Ed Cohen

Martin Luther King Jr. Family Services partnered with Britt Ruhe Director of Common Wealth Murals and Rosemary Tracy Woods, executive director and chief curator of Art for the Soul Gallery to have the "Say Their Names" mural painted on the side of their building by noted mural artists Wane One, El Souls, and Nero.

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VOTE ★★ ★ VOTE ★★ ★ VOTE ★★ ★ VOTE ★★ ★

**LAST DAY TO REGISTER FOR SEPTEMBER 1st
 PRIMARY IS WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12TH**

AF-AM NEWS bits

By Frederick A. Hurst

SEE HOW MAYOR SARNO GOT BUSTED

Mayor Sarno got busted by Black city councilors who were trying to collaborate with him on the issue of change in the culture of the Springfield police department. Toward that end, councilors Justin Hurst, Tracye Whitfield and Marcus Williams came up with an idea for funding supplemental training for police which they forwarded to the mayor for discussion. As he has so often done in the past, Mayor Sarno didn't respond, it seems, because he has a problem collaborating with councilors of color. Instead, he cheated by simply taking the three Black councilors' suggestions and incorporating them into a news release and claiming that it was his idea in cooperation with other folks in his administration and other folks in the Black community. He lied and got caught because he had cheated the same way so many times before that council president Justin Hurst thought it wise to send a copy of his e-mail to Mayor Sarno to Peter Goonan at the *The Republican* ahead of time while waiting for the mayor to respond. Here is what Justin Hurst wrote to Peter Goonan:

Good morning...I just want you to be aware of the dialogue that is occurring between a few Councilors and the Mayor. I know there is a tendency for the Mayor to co-opt issues and ideas as though they originated from his team. I'm hopeful that the Mayor and the Council can work together on the issue below, but in the event we can't, at least you know that we attempted to do so. This information may prove helpful in a future story, but for now please keep our efforts confidential.

Justin Hurst's e-mail was sent to Mayor Sarno on June 25 at 6:19 a.m. and a blind copy was sent to Peter Goonan at *The Republican* on the same day at 6:25 a.m. In the body of his e-mail to the mayor, Justin Hurst requested a meeting between himself, Whitfield and Williams the next morning, Friday, June 26 at 10:00. Instead, before the day was out, Mayor Sarno took the information from the Black councilors' document and created a news release in which he claimed their ideas were his own. When Elizabeth Román at *The Republican*

received the Mayor's news release and reviewed the councilors' documents already in the paper's possession, she contacted all three councilors for comments and wrote an article that appeared in the July 26th *Republican* exposing the mayor's plagiarism. That's what I call being busted!

SEE HOW MAYOR SARNO GOT BUSTED

Elizabeth Román wrote of her interview with Marcus Williams: **"Williams said it goes beyond Sarno presenting a plan or an idea as his own – it's about silencing marginalized voices."** And she quoted Williams as saying: **"It goes to show he likes to mute Black voices as it relates to Black issues and then present this package to the Black community as if it is his own. I have a problem with that..."**

SEE HOW MAYOR SARNO GOT BUSTED

Elizabeth Román wrote of her interview with Tracye Whitfield: **"Whitfield said it's not about getting credit, but about acknowledging the council's effort to collaborate with the mayor."** And she quoted Whitfield as saying: **"No credit is really needed when you're doing the right thing...We sent our proposal in a good faith effort to work together. We asked to meet with him tomorrow (Friday) and we did not even receive a courtesy response to the email saying that they already had a plan in place. It was silence, so we were shocked to see the press release from the mayor with language that is almost verbatim one of our suggestions."**

SEE HOW MAYOR SARNO GOT BUSTED

Elizabeth Román wrote: **"...a statement from the mayor's office credited Police Commissioner Clapprood, Health and Human Services Commissioner Helen Caulton-Harris, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Attorney Talia Gee, and several other staff members and community leaders for helping come up with this allotment of funds and new programs. But it made no mention of city councilors Justin Hurst, Tracye Whitfield and Marcus Williams, who sent Sarno an email suggesting that exact allotment of funds and ways in which it could be used..."**

SEE MAYOR SARNO FOR WHO HE IS

Mayor Sarno appears by his recent behavior to be trying to pit Black folks against Black folks. It's an old, worn out White trick that he seems to think he invented. What he doesn't know is that Black folks picked up on that trick long ago and are sophisticated enough to defend against it, not by fighting each other but by foiling the mayor's bad intentions in ways that he can't even imagine.

SEE MAYOR SARNO FOR WHO HE IS

If he thinks that he can ignore, without serious consequences, the people who we elected to office to represent us, two of whom were elected at-large by a diverse voter base and one of whom is president of the council, then he is wrong.

SEE MAYOR SARNO FOR WHO HE IS

So far Mayor Sarno has been given a pass by the Black community primarily because he is ever present at Black events with his smiley façade and warm handshakes. It has only been recently that folks have taken a more critical look at him and, altogether too often, he has come up wanting. How he could have appointed three White police commissioners in a row without input from the community he serves and ignore the community's persistent demand for an independent police commission is beyond me, especially since all of his choices came from the ranks of the very police department the community is demanding be seriously reformed.

GO JOE!

Many local insiders must be shaking in their boots at recent Kennedy/Markey poll numbers taken by Democratic candidates. One was taken in western Massachusetts by our own Congressman Richard Neal and the other by a candidate running in Kennedy's congressional district. Both polls show Kennedy trouncing Markey by double digits in their race for the senate seat. The western Mass locals were supposed to deliver for Markey but it looks like they are going to get Joe Kennedy III as their next senator. And my bet is that Joe is going to be real mad at some folks. As if that isn't shocking enough, a May poll showed Kennedy trouncing Markey in Boston by 30 points and he is several million dollars ahead of Markey in fundraising. Go Joe! ■

VOTE VOTE VOTE

☆☆☆ ☆☆☆ ☆☆☆

COMMUNITY

LEADERSHIP PIONEER VALLEY



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History Has Its Eyes on Us

By Lora Wondolowski

I grew up in a mostly white suburb of Chicago during the 1970s. There were no Black families, Latinos, or even Jews in my subdivision. We encountered African-Americans when we drove into Chicago or watched *Good Times*. I knew that my dad's family had moved out of the South Side to open a tavern and other members of the family moved because the neighborhood was changing. We knew that was code for integration. Sadly, I don't think my experience was particularly unique at the time or probably would be today.

I also had the privilege of not interacting with or really thinking about

the police until later in my life. I grew up assuming that the police were there to help us. It was fashionable to think of the police as the "pigs" in the 70s but it didn't go deeper than that in my bubble.

My perception of the police began changing in high school. My younger brother sported a big mohawk in high school. He was regularly pulled over in fishing expeditions like a "broken" blinker that rarely resulted in a ticket. I, on the other hand, was never pulled over. In college, I travelled to DC for an anti-war protest with friends. The march had been incredibly peaceful and without incident all day. That evening my friends and I joined a peace protest in Lafayette Park (across from the White House) that

included drumming and song. While standing there, we noticed mounted police quietly coming up from behind us. I started getting nervous. Less than five minutes later, police vans pulled up and announced that we needed to clear the area. Before we had time to move, they advanced from all sides. I saw kids being clubbed and dragged into the vans. We just ran as fast as we could out of there. It was terrifying. It was also clear that they had all the power and could wield it as they wished.

I know today that these experiences are just a small window into the day-to-day reality of people of color in communities across the country. I have been privileged to have had colleagues and leadership participants of color share their experiences with me and the class. These are painful stories that need to be heard and listened to.

We have tried to create a space for these kinds of dialogues in our program and to teach the skills of inclusive leadership. From the outside, I often see the moments that dig deeper and lead to new insights.

There are also moments when we can't get past our ingrained stories to find common ground. This moment in time makes me question whether we are doing enough to prepare leaders. How do we get beyond inclusion to real change? Are we preparing them for the resistance they will face?

"History has its eyes on you." –

Lin Manuel-Miranda, from Hamilton.

The callous killing of George Floyd was truly horrific and unfortunately not new. I hope to not let this moment pass and go onto business as usual (whatever that means right now) next month. It is time to dismantle the stories from my childhood. The path forward will be uncomfortable and require us to live in that discomfort so that we can come out in a new place of understanding. May the leaders with privilege do more listening than speaking right now. May the leaders with the most power do more. Now is the time for great leaders to lead and stop resisting those who are. Leadership demands courage and if this isn't the moment, when is? ■



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FEATURE ARTICLE



Gianna Allentuck is a Mother, Educator, and Community Volunteer.

To connect with Gianna regarding Education and Hope topics discussed herein, please contact her at gallentuck@aol.com.

Side by Side

Voices lifted. Hearts aligned. Actions inspired.

CONTROVERSIAL ALERT!



Crystal Hodge-Lizana Last night I had a really in depth convo with my daughter regarding people's decision to post about George Floyd's death. While we both agree that we don't think people should repost his actual killing (because by now it's been seen enough and we feel it may be disrespectful to the family), we disagree on whether posting anything will make a difference on the issue of police brutality.

The other part of the convo was whether our Caucasian, Latino, Asian brothers and sisters have the same outrage about the incident because on our timelines we're not seeing any posts from them. We also talked about why we think they don't post about issues like this.

So with all that being said, we would like to hear from you regarding the following:

Do you think posting about incidents such as George Floyd will actually make a difference regarding police brutality?

Do you think other races are affected by incidents such as this?

If so, why are they less likely to post about it?

Other than posting what do you think should be done to combat this problem?

If you disagree with someone please be respectful.

Thank you.
Crystal

Crystal Hodge-Lizana; May 28, 2020; 5:19 PM on Facebook



Gianna Allentuck

Dear Crystal,

Thank you for writing this post. Though you inspire me daily as a colleague and friend, I was particularly moved by your questions here...

For me, I don't think posting as a call-to-action makes a lasting difference. I think people may scroll, read, like or comment,

but then they move on to the next issue while the post or hashtag disappears into the social media abyss... Posting to post to look like I've done something to me feels disingenuous. Or empty. An action that seems like action but results in no action.

I also struggle posting and affixing to a hashtag and aligning with a movement sometimes factored by mixed messages... As someone who has beloved friends and mentors of different races who are law enforcement; who has seen the care of officers of different races help my family and bring knowledge, love, and peace to my schoolchildren; and who has a son dedicated to joining the military to serve and save lives, this is where I have difficulty hashtagging or protesting – or choosing a side.

Recent footage of aggressive violent protestors chanting F*** the Police, throwing bottles and bricks at Officers – endangering lives, including black lives – and painting Kill All Cops on Police and military vehicles while marching side by side with peaceful protestors holding hands, singing songs, and hoisting Black Lives Matter signs seems contradictory. Divisive for the cause whose mission is not to use violence to end violence but is to combat and counter violence to end violence.

And conflicting for me. I know that that violence is not representative of the whole movement, the same way police brutality is not representative of the whole of the police departments. But if I post in support of the overall mission, am I also supporting those few who undermine the mission? I don't condone violence against those who risk their lives every day for others because when I see the videos, I think of my friends and mentors in blue; and I don't know how to avoid blurring that line in the face of mixed messages. The tragic irony here being that the heinous actions of aggressive violent Police Officers – undermining the overall mission

of protect and serve – sparked the protests in the first place. But police brutality and violence against police are all crimes. And unacceptable. Because of the pain. To all the victims. And families. On both sides. And that's where your post comes in. And the posts of many of my black friends. And the conversations. Sharing and showing the pain. Beyond George Floyd. Beyond the protests. To the everyday realities – and complexities – of living life as a Black person.

Feelings and expressions of agony. Anger. Fear. Fatigue. Helplessness. Brokenness. And somehow still strength. Still hope. You and your children. They and their children. Our children. Are speaking. And now I am listening.

You see, I did not know George Floyd. I did not post his name. But I now know he cried out for his Mama. And I am a mama. And this breaks my heart.

I did not know Tamir Rice. I did not share his picture. But the pictures of teddy bears at his memorial site remind me of the stuffed animals we distribute at school on Friendship Day – celebrating diversity and teaching acceptance. Remind me of the joy and promise of being a child. A promise stolen from Tamir. I did not know Trayvon Martin. I did not hashtag Black Lives Matter. But the more the people I love share their anguish, expose their wounded hearts, and speak the blood and the raw into awareness, the more I realize: I don't need to know George, Tamir, or Trayvon. I know you.

And your children. And my friends and their children. And my colleagues and school children. And my mentors and heroes. And community partners. And the people who inspire me always. And all of your Black Lives Matter. To me. Dearly.

I see the people I love in pain.

I am sorry it took me so long to get here.

What can I do now? Lift up, listen and learn from Black voices and experiences. Help educate myself and others.

Support a unified message of purposeful and peaceful resolution.

Sustain awareness. And act.

Together.

With you, side by side...

Gianna

#YourandRémanispostsmadeadifference

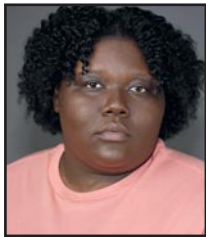
#Thankyouforeducatingandinspiring

continues to page 7

Side by Side

Voices lifted. Hearts aligned. Actions inspired.

continued from page 6



As I was starting to set up to record my audition today, I could just feel myself uneasy. I found myself on the verge of tears going over my material. And it's definitely because of the climate of the world today.

Rémani *With my monologue being about surviving being black in America, I found that I could not escape the pain because this is no longer just a monologue anymore. It's becoming my actual thoughts and feelings. I know that theater is supposed to imitate life, but right now there's not a difference. Right now I'm no longer just "acting". I'm saying lines that I would say on my own.*

#NoIAmNotOkay
#BlackActorinAmerica

Rémani
Rémani; May 29, 2020; 1:25 PM on Facebook



*Rémani and
Crystal Hodge-Lizana*



**Cecelia
Allentuck**

Dear Rémani,

As a white girl living in America, I've never had any hardships based on the color of my skin. From a young age, I was aware of racism, whether individual or systemic. But I was not aware enough. As I grew older and learned more about the world around me, I started

to see the racial injustices of this country. When I read your post, I was really touched by your pain. No person should feel the way you feel, and yet so many do. This is not fair. I also felt a special connection to you because I am an actor; and theater is my safe escape from when I am feeling anxious and needing to relax. But I only feel that way sometimes. After reading your story, I see that those feelings are your everyday life, solely because of the color of your skin. Finding a connection between theater and reality is important, but theater is supposed to be the creative and helpful

outlet for our feelings, not the direct translation of our life. You don't have this escape. And you are not ok. And this is not fair. I want to help with peace and love, but mostly with hope and support. With you, side by side...
Cecelia



*Gianna and Cecelia
Allentuck*

Author's Note: My dear friend Crystal asked some serious questions, and I provided my honest answers. No right or wrong. Just honest about navigating what to think and what to do and how to help. I also included the below articles on allyship because each in some way speaks to my answers, including pointing out my faults. Why would I do this? Because my role as an author is to write from my head – and my heart – to make readers think and feel. To share perspectives. To continue this effort, Side by Side: *Voices lifted. Hearts aligned. Actions inspired.* was created. Side By Side is a developing multi-media initiative whose purpose is to lift up Black voices to be heard, received, and acknowledged through genuine sharings and discussions between black and non-black people resulting in ongoing, collaborative, purposeful, peaceful, and positive actions. Side by Side is about sustainable education, awareness, and action. For more information or how you can get involved, please visit Side-by-SideVoices.com and Contact Us at info@sidebysidevoices.com.

White People, Please Stop Declaring Yourself Allies - Here's why I'm troubled by the resurgence of ally culture: You don't get a badge of honor for helping to dismantle the racist system you're complicit in.

Ernest Owens; Phillymag.com; 6/15/2020, 10:48 a.m.
<https://www.phillymag.com/news/2020/06/15/white-people-ally-culture/>

Performative Allyship Is Deadly (Here's What to Do Instead) – Activism can't begin and end with a hashtag; Holiday Phillips; Forge.medium.com; May 9, 2020.

<https://forge.medium.com/performative-allyship-is-deadly-c900645d9f1f>

VOTE ★ ★ ★ **VOTE** ★ ★ ★ **VOTE** ★ ★ ★ **VOTE** ★ ★ ★

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE ON

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

COMMUNITY

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Elections Have Consequences

Zaida Govan



Zaida Govan is a native of Springfield via Puerto Rico with a passion for improving the community she serves. She can be reached at 413.301.2533 or zaida.govan@yahoo.com

When I woke up on November 8, 2016, and found out that trump (intentional lower case) was going to occupy the White House, I was sick. My stomach hurt, my hands were shaking, and I cried for a week. I knew the world as we knew it was over. The day before we were looking forward to a post black presidency with so many advances after a deep dark recession. Our economy had finally started to come up. Unemployment was on its

way down and we had survived a few scary times during the 8 years of Obama's presidency. Bin Laden had been killed avenging 9/11.

Of course, President Obama didn't do all that I thought he could have done in regards to race relations and other issues in this country. As a community organizer, I thought he would have pushed harder for racial and social justice. After all, that was his life's work before becoming the POTUS. I know he had all those people who were pushing against anything he tried to do no matter how much it would benefit the people in the U.S. but I think he could have done more. Or at least tried. I still think he was the best President we have had and after the current occu-

continues to page 9

COMMUNITY BEAT

Where Do We Go From Here?

By Ken Harris



Ken Harris is a member of Puppeteers of America and a graduate of STCC. Follow him at shadowedu.blogspot.com <https://shadowworldpresent.wixsite.com/safe>

In the latest string of killings by police officers involving unarmed blacks across America, George Floyd lost his life face down in hand cuffs while a Minneapolis police officer pinned his knee over the rear of George Floyd's neck. This horrifying death, caught on video, sent a heatwave of anger across the nation that culminated in peaceful protests, rioting, and looting in a land already plagued with the COVID-19 pandemic.

I was deeply disturbed by the actions of Officer Derek Chauvin and the inaction of the other three officers present who failed to intervene after Mr. Floyd repeatedly told them he couldn't breathe. Can you imagine seeing a loved one or someone else you care about suffering the same way? Even the medical examiner's controversial autopsy report claimed Mr. Floyd's own health conditions contributed to his death. Really? Whose blood pressure wouldn't soar in any type of physical altercation? If we do hold some of this report to be true, the officer's knee is still officially regarded as the major factor that lead to his death. If that was taken out of the equation, he would've survived the encounter.

American history shows us that Mr. Floyd was not the first unarmed, black person to die by deadly police force nor will it be the last. This left me pondering how it got to that point and what can we all do together collectively as a country to prevent these types of incidents? I truly believe accountability for wrongs made by

those employed in public service should be acknowledged by the highest ranking authorities. But is acknowledging the practice of racial biases within a particular department and the financial liability to a city enough to convince top official decision makers to avoid that route? So much for fairness and adhering to a sworn oath, right?

It was alleged that Mr. Floyd used a counterfeit \$20 dollar bill to pay for cigarettes in a grocery store. Anyone familiar with law enforcement agencies knows the Secret Service specializes in investigating counterfeit claims, but a local police department can be summoned to initiate an initial investigation. I recall learning in college that the Secret Service advised consumers or businesses not to handle counterfeit money, but if they do, to contact law enforcement right away so they can investigate where the fake currency came from. In some cases, counterfeit bills

continues to page 9

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(Please see the news article in this edition of Af-Am Point of View on page 30.)

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COMMUNITY

FROM THE STATE HOUSE

Request for Immediate Creation of a Meaningful Civilian Review Board or Police Commission

SPRINGFIELD, MA – June 23, 2020

Letter to Mayor Domenic Sarno.

... **R**ecently, our city has faced several issues of concern, particularly, the re-hiring of officers who had been suspended in relation to the Nathan Bill incident. Other issues have not yet been resolved and have accumulated because of the lack of effective ways to address them.

Although many communities may be struggling to address similar concerns, the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus, on June 2, 2020, adopted a 10- point plan outlining concrete and actionable steps that can be taken to combat systemic racism, police brutality, and various other forms of injustices. Among these steps

By State Representative Bud L. Williams

is the creation of a civilian review board or police commission that would have subpoena power and the authority to hire, or fire officers who violate the law.

We both know the history regarding this issue. The Black and Latino Caucus has identified this as a priority. Springfield is in a prime position to improve relations between the police department and our citizens. I am calling upon you with a sense of urgency to take the actions necessary to either re-create the Police Commission, as voted by the City Council, which is directly elected by the citizens of Springfield. The Commission must be vested with subpoena powers and the right to appropriately discipline personnel or make the Citizen Review Board an elected body and vest it with these same powers.

The name by which we call the group is not

urgently important at this time. The important point is that we have an effective and properly authorized oversight group to ensure that our police officers are fulfilling their duties as officers sworn to serve and protect citizens within the confines of the law and are not committing offenses outside of the “laws of the land.”

I am calling upon you to exercise your authority to appoint a Police Commission or Civilian Review Board. There is such an urgency in addressing this matter that it may be necessary to support a referendum petition to pass a binding measure to create such a body for the benefit of our constituents. I’m confident that we can accomplish this effort for the benefit of our community!

... Thank you for your anticipated support of this request. ■

COMMUNITY BEAT

Where Do We Go From Here?

continued from page 8

will be received by a merchant and not detected as counterfeit. It will then be transferred into a till and might be given to the next customer in the form of change. So despite the advance in technology, human error can lead to someone innocently picking up a counterfeit and then passing it on to another merchant without realizing it.

In all my time of studying cases of scams, I never heard of a suspected fraudster dying in police custody like this case. If we take into consideration the numerous misconduct reports filed against Officer Chauvin and other officers like him across the country, it’s quite difficult to rule out inefficiency in the police department’s pre-employment process. Perhaps community involvement in assisting in interviews can help weed out applicants who are joining police departments for the wrong reasons. It is evident that different policies and procedures must be implemented to help foster a positive climate between communities and police departments during these challenging times. We need each other to prosper.

Follow me at

<https://shadowworldpresent.wixsite.com/safe> ■

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Elections Have Consequences

continued from page 8

part of that house the best we will have for a long time.

After trump, our standards have dropped. Now, we will settle for another old white man because he’s not trump. Today, since that November day, we are in a pandemic that could have been prevented if we had the pandemic response team that President Obama had put in place before leaving office. We have the highest unemployment rate ever. Black and brown people are being affected by all of this much more because of pre-existing disparities in our communities. Racism is now politically correct and everything is either red or blue. Police brutality and murder is legal. This is what I was afraid of on that November day.

Many people have given up on politics in this country, which started when another movie star president began the process of putting money before people by lowering corporate interest rates to benefit them instead of regular folk. Today only 30% of people vote in a presidential election. That is how this has happened. In local elections the percentage is even lower. Sometimes as low as 5%. This is why there is an outright proud racist sitting

in the White House today.

I keep dreaming about a time when we ALL go out and vote at every election. People say, “I don’t get into politics” so they don’t vote. What they don’t realize is that politics are in their daily lives. Politics decide how their small business will succeed or fail. Politics invade your ability to take a jog and be able to return home—Ahmad Aubrey. Politics affect how much you will pay for toilet paper during a pandemic. If people realized how much politics affect our daily lives, they would ALL get out and vote.

I’ve been thinking of how I could get that message out. I know people are busy trying to survive and don’t have time to pay attention to every election but still. That is by design. That is voter suppression at its finest. And we suppress our own vote. Our schools are now at risk of being made all private because millions of people decided to sit out the last presidential election after we had 8 years of a black president.

Our lives are a hundred percent worse than they were 4 years ago and it’s because elections have consequences. ■

JUDICIARY (SJC) STATEMENT ON BIAS AND INEQUALITY



Dear Members of the Judiciary and the Bar:

June 3, 2020 - The events of the last few months have reminded us of what African-Americans know all too well: that too often, by too many, black lives are not treated with the dignity and respect accorded to white lives. As judges and as lawyers, we are both saddened and angry at the confluence of recent events that have revealed how much more we need to do to create a just, fair, and peaceful society.

But we must do more than express our feelings of sadness and anger.

As judges, we must look afresh at what we are doing, or failing to do, to root out any conscious and unconscious bias in our courtrooms; to ensure that the justice provided to African-Americans is the same that is provided to white Americans; to create in our courtrooms, our corner of the world, a place where all are truly equal.

As lawyers, we must also look at what we are doing, or failing to do, to provide legal assistance to those who cannot afford it; to diminish the economic and environmental inequalities arising from race; and to ensure that our law offices not only hire attorneys of color but also truly welcome them into the legal community.

And as members of the legal community, we need to reexamine why, too often, our criminal justice system fails to treat African-Americans the same as white Americans, and recommit ourselves to the systemic change needed to make equality under the law an enduring reality for

all. This must be a time not just of reflection but of action.

There is nothing easy about any of this. It will be uncomfortable: difficult conversations, challenging introspection, hard decisions. We must recognize and address our own biases, conscious and unconscious. We must recognize and condemn racism when we see it in our daily lives.

We must recognize and confront the inequity and injustice that is the legacy of slavery, of Jim Crow, and of the disproportionate incarceration of African-Americans, and challenge the untruths and unfair stereotypes about African-Americans that have been used to justify or rationalize their repression. And we must examine the underlying reasons why African-Americans have suffered disproportionately from the COVID-19 pandemic, both in terms of the number of deaths and the extent of economic hardship it has caused, and, where possible, address the causes of those disparities.

Perhaps most importantly, it is a time for solidarity and fellowship with African-American judges and attorneys, to acknowledge their pain, to hear about the conversations they now have with their children, and to stand together when others may try to divide us. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote from a Birmingham jail:

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Sincerely,

*Ralph D. Gants
Chief Justice*

*Frank M. Gaziano
Associate Justice*

*Kimberly S. Budd
Associate Justice*

*Scott L. Kafker
Associate Justice*

*Barbara A. Lenk
Associate Justice*

*David A. Lowy
Associate Justice*

*Elsbeth B. Cypher
Associate Justice*

SCHOOL COMMITTEE (MASC) STATEMENT ON ANTI-RACISM



Massachusetts Association Of School Committees

June 16, 2020 – The Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) released proposed resolutions to its 2400-person membership, representing 319 boards calling for full funding for COVID-19 related expenses and for action to address racism as a factor in public education and civic life. The documents, issued by Deborah Davis of Woburn, a member of the Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational School Committee and current MASC president, are designed to bring both matters to

the attention of state and local officials.



Denise Hurst



Jacob Oliveira

Prepared by Springfield School Committee member Denise Hurst, MASC’s Vice President and founder of the MASC Minority Caucus, and Ludlow School Com-

mittee member Jacob Oliveira, a former MASC President and Member of the Board of Directors of the National School Boards Association, the resolutions are a response to a grassroots effort by local elected officials across the state to end racism and get students back to safe and secure schools. “All of this is linked to the social and emotional wellness of students,” explained Davis who made the link between “being able to afford effective student safety equipment on one hand and a safe and supportive environment on the other.” The resolution linked to COVID-19 expenses was designed to protect districts from

an additional fiscal blow from state mandates that are estimated to average over \$1.4 million per district.

Oliveira, who led the national effort to secure protections against bias and bigotry as policy of the National School Boards Association, successfully won adoption of anti-discrimination resolutions two years ago. Ms. Hurst has been a driving force behind efforts statewide to link the elimination of bigotry and systemic racism as a key factor in keeping students emotionally well and motivated to learn. Their 2018 floor strategies secured a revision of national policy for NSBA

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HEALTH OFFICIALS (NACCHO) STATEMENT ON RACISM



Racially Driven Violence Against Black Americans Is a Public Health Issue

June 2, 2020 – The National Association of County and City Health Official (NACCHO) has watched the protests shaking America with a mixture of raw emotions. As the membership organization representing the nation’s nearly 3,000 local health departments, NACCHO strongly condemns the racist violence that took the lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Sean Reed, Tony McDade, and so many others. NACCHO calls on this nation to never forget the names of those lost to this legacy of injustice. The legacy of violence against Black Americans extends deep into the history of this country and has cost countless lives. This violence is a public health issue deeply rooted in our nation’s legacy of systemic racial, economic, and social oppression and injustice.

For Black people in the U.S., racist-driven violence is an everyday reality. What is shocking to some is the status quo for so many. That status quo must change, and it must change now.

Racism is a public health issue and local health departments should play a lead role in efforts to address it. Violence or the threat of violence—driven by on-going, systematic racism—creates a toxic stress that impacts the health of children, families, and communities. Local health departments have the authority to use data to highlight the impact of police violence and the legacy that drives it.

They have the ability to create a bridge to communities of color and provide support for a truth and reconciliation process to begin the long, slow road to healing. They have the ability to work with law enforcement to create a change in culture so desperately needed. We are committed to building their capacity to do this work. As we are all called to grapple with the reality of America’s oppressive history.

In pursuit of a more just and equitable future for all people, NACCHO supports:

- Leading efforts to build ties between local government and communities focusing on health equity to achieve community centered solutions.
- Communicating how the anticipation and long-term effects of violence and daily intimidation increase toxic stress that severely harms health of families and whole communities.
- Eliminating discriminatory policing practices, such as racial profiling and stop-and-frisk, which disproportionately target Black people and communities.
- Changing laws that lead to confrontation and arrests for minor infractions, eliminating the criminalization of inconsequential or victimless behavior.
- Releasing clear and accurate data on policing including arrests, use of force, and decertification of law enforcement.

- Continuing research on the impact of police violence on Black communities and in non-Black communities of color.
- Holding police accountable for discriminatory actions and discriminatory use of force.

NACCHO supports those engaged in protests across the country who are exercising their right to speak out against injustice, a right vital to the founding of this nation. We recognize that at their core, these protests are driven by centuries of injustice. Local health departments must support Black communities experiencing this violence in expressing their voice and building power to act on the unjust processes and decisions that lead to permanent stress, deprivation, poor living conditions, and chronic health and mental health conditions.

More importantly, NACCHO calls on ourselves, our members, our partners, and people across this nation to not only acknowledge but *confront* the racial and economic oppression that has culminated in the unrest we see today. Local health department should work to change the public narrative from focusing on individual incidents and occurrences to discussing and addressing the legacy of racial, economic, and social oppression and injustices faced by Black communities. Let us come together to listen, foster dialogue, and act: the health and survival of Black communities, and thus our nation’s health, depends on it. ■

MASC STATEMENT ON ANTI-RACISM

continued from page 10

by a slim, three-vote majority. The state’s school committees will be considering these resolutions locally, culminating in a formal vote by the MASC Delegate Assembly in November.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE ANTI-RACISM RESOLUTION:

WHEREAS, as schools have the responsibility to equip students with their civil right of obtaining a free and appropriate public education, it is the responsibility of each school to ensure we create a welcoming community for ALL students; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility that every district provides to all district staff, including School Committee members’ annual professional development on diversity, equity and inclusion; and

WHEREAS, every district will commit to recruiting and retaining a diverse and culturally responsive teaching workforce; and

WHEREAS, every district will examine their policies for institutional and systemic racialized practices and implement change with sustainable policies that are evidence based; and

WHEREAS, every district will incorporate into their curriculum the history of racial oppression and works by black authors and works from diverse perspectives; and

WHEREAS, we as school district leaders can no longer remain silent to the issues of racism and hate that continue to plague our public and private institutions;

RESOLVED: that [District] and all the school districts in the Commonwealth must guarantee that racist practices are eradicated, and diversity, equity and inclusion is embedded and practiced for our students, families, faculty and staff.

We must ensure our own school culture and that of every district in the Commonwealth is anti-racist, that acknowledges that all lives cannot matter until black lives matter.

COMMUNITY

SPECIAL TO POINT OF VIEW

SAY THEIR NAMES

By Britt Ruhe, Director of Commonwealth Murals



Britt Ruhe

A tribute mural in Springfield to black and brown people killed by police.

Over three days and nights at the beginning of June, a tribute mural to George Floyd and all other black and brown people killed by police was painted on the Martin Luther King Community Center. “Say Their Names” includes the names of the more than 60 unarmed black and brown people who were unarmed when killed by police in the US in the past 12 months (from June 1, 2019 to May 31, 2020). The mural also includes the names of seven Springfield residents killed by police.

This project was hosted by the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Services of Springfield and organized by Rosemary Tracy Woods, Director of Art for the Soul Gallery and Commonwealth Murals. The mural was designed and painted by internationally-known muralist and graffiti artist Wane One from New York City and Holyoke, with assistance from two additional muralists, Nero and Souls. (On Instagram: [@waneone](#), [@uncle_ro](#), [@soulsnyc](#))

Wane One has been an active and progressive participant in the NYC graffiti and street art community for 36 years, since 1983 when he was 13. Wane has designed for legendary hip-hop groups and artists like Gangstarr, Jeru the Damager and Group Home and well-known brands such as Nike, Reebok, New Balance and RYU. Wane has painted over 40 murals across

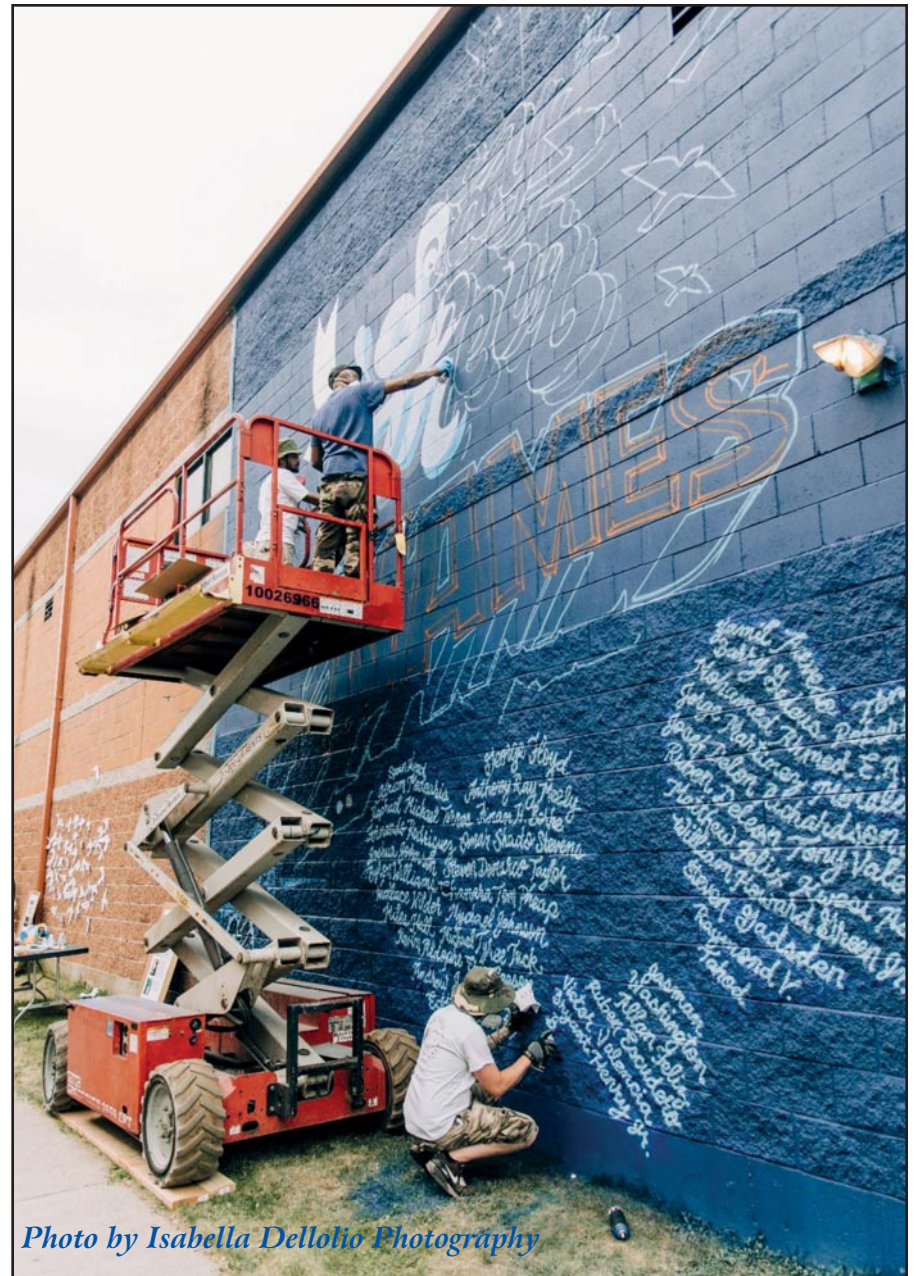


Photo by Isabella Dellolio Photography



Photo by Wane One

the US and around the world, as well as two other murals in Springfield.

Speaking about this mural, Wane recounted, “As kids we did art and played games in the streets. In the late eighties in the Bronx, a guy by the name of Michael Stewart got killed by the police for writing graffiti. A young kid – he was 14 years old. Even back then, we thought to ourselves, ‘We’re painting graffiti – it’s illegal, but it wasn’t like we were hurting people. He got killed by the police for writing graffiti.’ There are so many names. It is really painful. We have to bring attention to injustice and racism. We have to keep striving and moving forward. People have to take accountability for their actions, and everyone has to stand up together.”

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COMMUNITY

SPECIAL TO POINT OF VIEW

SAY THEIR NAMES

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At a press conference about the mural, Ronn Johnson, Director of Martin Luther King Family Services said, “Here today we commemorate the lives of good black and brown men and women who had their lives snuffed out due to an altercation with a law enforcement official. This mural depicts the names of some of the 70 individuals who have lost their lives, not over the last 10 years or 5 years, but the past 12 months in America.” Also speaking at the press conference, Britt Ruhe, Director of Common Wealth Murals said, “Speaking to my fellow white folks – come stand in front of this mural. Say their names. Read the names of every single person whose names are on this mural and see how it makes you feel. And then think about how it would feel if your mother’s name was on that wall, or your child, or your friend.” As she watched the mural go up, Rosemary Tracy Woods com-

mented, “When I see the names, I think – what a tragedy that so many individuals have lost their lives by the hands of people who are supposed to be protecting them.”

For eight minutes at the change of each hour, local writers, musicians and dancers gave tribute to those who have experienced violence and death at the hands of police. These performances were organized by Tiffany Allecia of the Springfield Cultural Partnership. Among those presenting were Dr. Alice Farrell, Xavier Farrell, Aaron St. Louis, Bishop Timothy Paul, I’shay Nicole Roger, Moriah Leigh, Stephany Marryshow, Ysanne Marshall and Simbrit Paskins.

Reflecting on the performances, the muralists, and the response from the community, Ronn Johnson reflected, “This is the community that I love. The work here is not easy. The fuel is stuff like this.”



Photo by Isabella Dellolio Photography



Photo by Isabella Dellolio Photography

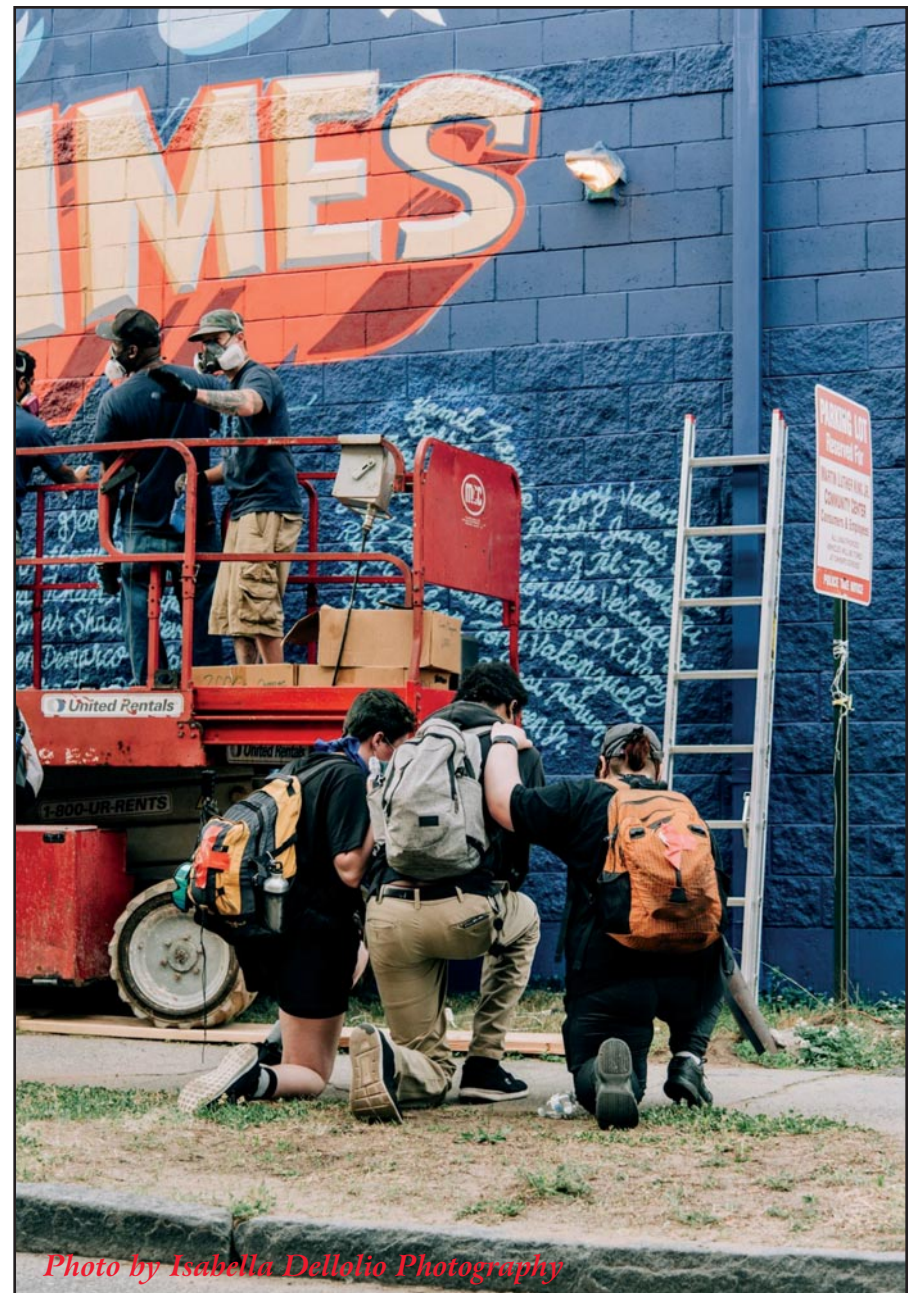


Photo by Isabella Dellolio Photography

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COMMUNITY

SPECIAL TO POINT OF VIEW

SAY THEIR NAMES



Photo by Isabella Dellolio Photography



Photo by Isabella Dellolio Photography



Photo by Isabella Dellolio Photography

HEALTH

YOUR HEALTH



Every precaution taken to keep Baystate Pediatric Offices safe for our young visitors and their parents

SPRINGFIELD, MA – It's a message that all parents and caregivers need to hear.

Don't skip your child's vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Since March, we have been seeing the rate of under-immunized infants double from 25% to 50%. This means that in our community, 50% of babies under 18 months old have not completed their immunization series," says Dr. Chrystal Wittcopp, medical director of Pediatrics at Baystate High Street Health Center - Pediatrics.

Statewide, the Massachusetts Department of Health has reported a 68% decrease in pediatric vaccinations.

"Although COVID-19 is a very serious illness and can affect children, the illnesses to protect against with vaccinations are more common and more harmful as far as we can tell for young children. It is critical to still protect them against those diseases in this COVID era," said Dr. Wittcopp.

Missing important vaccinations puts children at risk of preventable diseases such as measles, whooping cough, meningitis, and other life threatening illnesses. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that for children born between 1994 and 2018, immunizations will prevent about 419 million illnesses, 8 million hospitalizations, and 936,000 early deaths.

So, why are parents skipping child wellness visits, which often include necessary vaccinations.

Don't Skip Child Well Visits and Needed Vaccinations Over Concerns for COVID-19

"They are concerned for their child and themselves that they might pick up the novel coronavirus while visiting their pediatrician's office. But, we have taken every precaution to keep our offices safe for our young visitors and their parents," said Dr. John O'Reilly, chief, General Pediatrics, Baystate Children's Hospital.

At Baystate's pediatric primary care practices, new safety and infection control procedures are in place, including:

- All patients, family members and visitors will be asked questions about health symptoms before entering the waiting area.
- You will be given hand sanitizer and a fresh surgical mask.
- Your temperature will be taken using a forehead scanning thermometer.
- Office staff are screened and checked daily.
- Only 1 adult may accompany a pediatric patient to a visit.
- Appointments are spread out to minimize the number of people in our waiting areas, and patients are almost immediately brought into exam rooms.
- Potentially sick children are separated from those who are healthy.
- Patient rooms are thoroughly cleaned after each visit, and the remainder of the facility is cleaned throughout the day.

During the early months of a baby's life, they receive key infant immunizations to protect them from common childhood diseases such as whooping cough, common blood infections, and pneumonia. Babies are very susceptible to whooping cough – a disease that can be fatal for them but prevented with

vaccination.

At age one, babies receive their first measles vaccine.

"We know that there have been measles outbreaks across the United States and Massachusetts in the last several years. It is still in our community and it is important to protect them," said Dr. Wittcopp.

As children grow to ages four and five, their immunizations begin to wear off. It is important for them to have a booster dose to continue protection against those diseases, especially as they increase exposure at school.

At age 11, children receive another booster vaccine for tetanus and whooping cough to protect them through middle and high school. At that visit, they also receive vaccines against a type of meningitis seen in teens and young adults and against HPV, a virus that can cause cancer in both males and females. Teens will later get a second booster vaccine for meningitis and HPV to be sure they are fully protected.

"We are here. We are seeing patients in person and via telehealth. If you have questions or concerns, call us and we will find the best way to get your child the most appropriate care," said Dr. Wittcopp.

Baystate High Street Health Center Pediatrics will be holding vaccine only clinics on select Saturdays in June to provide access to those families who have difficulty coming into the office during the week.

For more information, call 413-794-2525 or visit Baystate Health Children's Hospital at baystatehealth.org/bch. ■



AMA Urges Extra Vigilance on COVID-Mitigating Steps

Statement attributable to: Susan R. Bailey, M.D., President, American Medical Association

June 12, 2020 – "In far too many states – in rural and urban locations – we are seeing an increase in COVID-19 cases that could lead to further illness, deaths and other potentially dangerous impacts on health systems across the country. Physicians, scientists and public health experts are learning more every day about COVID-19, but we already know what stops the spread of the virus – wearing a face mask, maintaining

physical distancing, and washing your hands regularly for 20 seconds. Adhering to these simple steps is the most effective way to prevent deaths and safely allow re-opening to continue. America's physicians and the men and women on the front lines of this health care crisis urge you: do not confuse re-opening with returning to normal. Acting as though COVID-19 is behind us now will lead to another surge of COVID-19 cases. We appreciate that many people have been tak-

ing steps over the last several months to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but we urge the public to continue to be vigilant in taking steps to mitigate the spread of the virus.

"Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) shortages remain an ongoing challenge and a significant hurdle that is preventing physician practices from re-opening. With PPE still in short supply, a second surge in COVID-19 cases not only risks additional lives – it jeopardizes routine medical care

and procedures and endangers our health care workers. The AMA continues to urge the Administration to implement a national coordinated strategy on the production, acquisition, and distribution of PPE supplies to both ensure that the extreme shortages faced by front-line providers during the initial COVID-19 surges will not recur and help non-hospital health care practices to re-open safely for routine patient care." ■

HEALTH

HEALTH MATTERS



Doris Sexton-Harris,
Health Consultant,
Doris can be
contacted at
dorharris77@hotmail.com

Reducing Stress During Covid-19

By Monifé Marshall



your personal intention for the day. Is it to be more present? To have more patience? To express yourself clearly? To have strength for challenges? To have more peace, love, joy and compassion? Welcome this intention into your mind and body. Inhale and lift the arms over your head, then exhale the hands to the center of your heart and receive.

You have just practiced yoga, the mind and body connected.

In addition to stilling the mind for self-awareness, be reminded of the importance of:

- Eating food that is clean, organic when possible, unprocessed, fresh and colorful
- Exercising daily—walk, run, dance, practice yoga
- Getting the best quality of sleep for 6-8 hours/night, uninterrupted

Combining the mindfulness with these three activities should bring mental, physical, emotional and spiritual wellness during these most difficult times.

Be well!

~Namasté

Follow Monife Marshall on Instagram @Yogaby-Monife

During these challenging times of uncertainty and unrest it is imperative that we take inventory of how we're feeling and coping mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. If we move about too quickly and anxiously, trying to merely survive these difficult times, we may find ourselves breaking down.

It only takes a few minutes to sit or lay still for a daily self-assessment and these 5-10 minutes could make a huge difference in our short- and long-term health and wellness.

What if we look deeper and assess how we actually feel mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually?

It starts with finding a quiet space with little to no distractions. Next, decide how to position yourself. Are you comfortable sitting up straight in a chair or on the floor? Would your body prefer to lay flat on the floor with either straight legs, spaced about hip width apart, or does your spine relax better with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor? Make certain you are comfortable and try keeping the spine as straight as possible.

Let your mind be clear of any distracting thoughts from the past and future. Your eyes can soften with the eyes half way closed or you can close the eyes ever so gently as if the eyelids are barely touching. Allow your mind to pay attention to your breathing. Notice if the breathing is fast and if it is, gently slow it down. Without controlling the breathing, allow it to become slower, breathe more deeply. Keep the breathing natural and flowing. Notice the chest and stomach gently rise and fall with each breath. Allow your mind to slowly survey your body from head to toe, without skipping the arms, wrist, hands and fingers, with each part of the body getting its own full inhale and exhale. Relax each part of your body on the exhale.

After completing this slow focused body assessment, create

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EARLY EDUCATION & CARE



Nicole Blais
is Director
of Community
Engagement HCS
Head Start, Inc.
nicole@headstart.org

Happy Birthday Head Start

By Nicole Blais



It's Head Start's 55th birthday! As we reflect on this milestone, we wanted to take a trip down memory lane to appreciate Head Start's history, celebrate the present and enthusiastically look towards the future. During the 1960s, a program called Project Head Start was in the initial design phases. Under the leadership of Sargent Shriver, scholars and child development experts like Dr. Edward Ziegler and Dr. Julius Richmond and federal administrators like Jule Sugarman had a vision to establish a long standing federally funded early learning program that supported the educational, health and nutritional needs of young, economically disadvantaged preschool children before they entered kindergarten. This goal was

achieved and on May 18, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson officially announced Project Head Start from the White House Rose Garden.

HCS Head Start, Inc. owes a debt of gratitude to the 1965 Junior League of Holyoke for helping to bring the program to the community. In 1965, we had one Head Start classroom in the Toepfert Housing complex in Holyoke and today we have 70 classrooms of infants, toddlers and preschoolers. They would be happy to know that 55 years later Head Start is thriving and has enrolled thousands of children in the area. Janis Santos, CEO of HCS Head Start, Inc., is celebrating a milestone of her own—47 years working for the program. She proudly acknowledges: "Over the last 55 years Head Start has served millions of children and our success stories are endless."

She is right. About a third of our

staff are past or current Head Start parents or alum and I am a proud graduate, Class of 76, of Parkside Early Learning Center in Ludlow, MA. On a national level, other people who have attended Head Start include comedian Chris Rock; athlete Shaquille O'Neal; Anna Maria Chavez, the first Latina CEO of Girl Scouts of the United States of America; and the list goes on and on. A little Head Start goes a long way and we are proud of the work the program does for countless children and their families each year.

The entire HCS Head Start team helps carry out the mission of the program. Mrs. Mary Craddock, Teacher Director at our Putnam Academy center reflects on the birthday, "As a teacher for HCS Head Start, I love the fact that I work for an agency that embraces diversity, and it also stands on the notion that all children deserve the right to succeed in school and in life. I

am not just going to be wishing for a great birthday for the agency, I am praying that the agency is always able to live up to its mission statement, which in part states 'to be the beacon of hope for a brighter future for the children and families we serve.'"

As we look forward to the future, we are excited about the possibilities that await. As the organization's longest serving employee and leader, Janis Santos had this to say about the program she has devoted a lifetime to, "I am so proud of the work that we do in Head Start. From its earliest days, Head Start has been rooted in the search for justice, equality and opportunity. We believe that all Head Start children deserve the opportunity to succeed in school and in life. We will continue our commitment to America's most vulnerable children for another 55 years." **Happy Birthday Head Start! ■**

HAPPY 55TH BIRTHDAY, HEAD START!



Every child deserves the right to succeed.
Head Start celebrates 55 years of helping children, families, and communities. Here's to the next 55 years of being a Beacon of Hope and a source of support for a brighter future.

#diversity #equality #opportunity

HCS Head Start, Inc.

EDUCATING children. SUPPORTING families. BUILDING healthy communities.

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EDUCATION

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK



*Daniel J. Warwick,
Superintendent at the
Springfield Public
Schools*

Seizes the Virtual Graduation Moment



June 12, 2020 – As the district ended two weeks of virtual commencement ceremonies yesterday, Superintendent of Schools Daniel Warwick announced that the Class of 2020 has

Class of 2020 Secures More Than \$18 Million in Scholarships

secured more than \$18 million in scholarships, with 67 percent of graduates poised to start college in the fall and 33 percent preparing to enter the military or start their careers.

“We are so proud of the Class of 2020,” said Warwick. “It’s been a challenging time for them, but they have shown true resilience and grace and I hope their graduation season is special and meaningful in unexpected ways.”

Nearly 1,300 students graduated this month. In addition to the eight virtual graduation ceremonies, every high school has or will host a special live graduation experience for each of their seniors. Strict social distancing and health protocols will be observed.

“I’m just so proud of the way our high school staff and administrators have worked creatively and tirelessly through this graduation season,” said

Warwick. “The community longed for seniors to have an opportunity to wear their caps and gowns in a ceremonial way and this will give them that chance, in addition to the having the virtual ceremonies.”

Focus Springfield, the City’s community media center, produced the virtual graduation ceremonies, which drew an online audience of more than 16,000 viewers in addition to those watching on Focus Springfield Channel 15.

Each virtual graduation included a special message tailored to each school from U.S. Congressman Richard E. Neal, along with the traditional line up of speakers. Springfield native and NFL player for the Miami Dolphins Christian Wilkins also provided a message especially for the graduates of the Springfield Alternative schools, which includes: Springfield Public Day High

School, Liberty Preparatory Academy, High School Completion Program, Gateway to College at Springfield Technical Community College, Gateway to College at Holyoke Community College, and Springfield High School.

Alternative Schools Principal Rhonda Jacobs said the atypical graduation circumstances created a space for reflection and creativity. “It forced us to think of new ways to celebrate our students and their achievements,” said Jacobs. “Here at the alternative schools, we enjoy a smaller setting that allows our students and teachers to form strong bonds. We get to see their growth in ways that many others in their lives may not, so we embraced the challenge and we all felt very good about it in the end. I think the pride and compassion we have as a School shined through, even virtually.” ■

Join the Conversation

**Springfield Public Schools is asking the
community to help build a**

“Portrait of a Graduate”

a vision of the skills and attributes

**Springfield students need to find success
in college and career.**

**Voice your opinion by taking
the community survey at**

www.springfieldpublicschools.com



CONGRATULATIONS 2020 GRADUATES!

INSPIRATIONAL THOUGHTS

A Message to the 2020 GRADUATES

By Patricia Spradley



Patricia A. Spradley,
Consultant for
3M Consulting, Inc.
patriciaspradley@msn.com

These are certainly different times. Who would have imagined that we would be celebrating our graduates with lawn signs, specially made face masks, drive-by recognitions, and zoom commencement speeches? I understand that things will not go back to exactly what they were, but I am optimistic that you will get to experience seeing and hearing your family members and friends celebrate you in ways close to what once was. You deserve to have the feelings that your parents and other seasoned adults are still able to reflect on, that bring smiles to our faces, albeit quite some time ago.

When I think of all the anticipation of our young people looking forward to being celebrated in a new decade, it saddens me that the current situation of the world did not allow this to happen. However, I quickly rebound and give Him honor and glory that you are HERE to be celebrated! Unfortunately, too many of our young people did not make it to graduation. Families are still dealing with the losses of this dreadful pandemic, as well as other unfortunate circumstances.

It made me happy to see so many of the graduates, high school and college, beaming with pride as people drove by with their well-wishes and honking of horns. Many of you were wearing your caps and

gowns with matching masks and even though we couldn't see those beautiful smiles, the gleam in your eyes told it all. You were making the best of the hand you have been dealt. You are a great example to follow. Figuring out ways to deal with the changes in positive ways is to be commended.

I was especially moved by the commencement speech that President Obama gave! Every 2020 graduate can now say that you were blessed to have him be a part of your graduation. How special is that? This graduation will go down in history. Don't focus on the reason being that it happened during COVID-19. This graduation year will be historic because of how you, the graduates, handled it. The world will be watching. The perseverance and resilience shown will not go unnoticed.

Graduation is a new beginning. It is a series of continuing steps, putting one foot in front of the other. It is my hope that as you move forward, whether with additional education, the military, or work, that your life experiences help you to contribute to the well-being of those people around you. Much gratitude should be given to those who helped you get to this point. But because of your experiences, there are many people you are able and expected to help, as well.

Your graduation is a milestone in your life. And I wish each of you the absolute best that life has to offer. You are such heroes. God bless you!

**CONGRATULATIONS
2020 GRADUATES!**

PEN & INK

Applaud the 2020 Graduate

By Renay Intisar Jihad

Second-by-second
Progress was made
Because step-by-step
You focused on your grades.

Hour-by-hour
You shut out noise and confusion
You did not want to be
Among those who were losing.

Day-by-day
Your non-stop effort was rewarded
Because you hung in there
Now you'll move forward.

Month-by-month
You did whatever it took
Learning math, science, and English
Reading a ton of essential books

Year-by-year
You kept up and did your best
The growth mindset
Helped you pass challenging tests.

The journey was often hard
But give up—That would never do
You put one foot in front of the other
Relying on personal talent
to successfully pull you through.

You realized you could manage
personal and societal demands
What a time to be in, yet out of school?
Those challenges framed your ladder
Each "I can't" step became "I can."
Sometimes you grumbled—even gave up
Snapped back and tried once again
You knew if you weren't defeated
You'd triumph and ultimately win.

Constant patience and perseverance
Vital sources from the soul
Pushed you straight forward
Toward a significant milestone and goal.

Enjoy this special time and space
Celebrate it by first showing
Gratitude to the beautiful people
They always kept you growing.

Mostly thank yourself
You have passed life's greatest test
In deciding against choosing failure
You have chosen this degree of success.



*Renay Intisar
Jihad*

Black Lives Matter Protests. . .



Black Lives Matter Protest in Amherst



Black Lives Matter Protest in Holyoke



Black Lives Matter Protest in Holyoke



Black Lives Matter Protest in Springfield



Black Lives Matter Protest in Springfield



Black Lives Matter Protest and Praise at Spring of Hope COGIC Parking Lot

. . . In The Community

Springfield City Councilors lead protest march from site of Nathan Bill's to the Nathan Bill Park



COMMUNITY

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Dwight Bachman

On July 4, a powerful, thought-provoking new movie titled “Justice on Trial” will be released. Prominent actors star in the movie and former Connecticut Supreme Court Justice Lubbie Harper Jr. superbly makes his acting debut on the big screen, along with his son, Lane Harper, who plays Medgar Evers!

“Justice on Trial” is timely in light of the recent incidents in Brunswick, Georgia, Central Park, New York and Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the long history of lynchings and police brutality (Remember Bull Connor) against African Americans.

“The film is historically accurate and educationally significant,” said Harper. “Chad Lawson Cooper is the screenwriter for the film. **Attorney John Gesmonde** plays the role of a civil rights lawyer who brings the suit on behalf of the ‘African American People.’ I am convinced that this film will be very interesting, entertaining and worthwhile. This movie directly addresses the criminal justice system and it raises the issue of reparations in a powerful manner.”

Arrange a watch party, reflect on current events and enjoy a timely movie! Follow the instructions for pre-ordering the film. **The discount code is HARPER1.**

Go to <https://www.justiceonthetrialthemovie.com/> for the trailer to the movie.

“Justice on Trial!”

New Movie Launches on July 4!

A CHAD LAWSON COOPER FILM
SUMLIN BROADCAST NETWORK - THE UNDERGROUND NETWORK

JUSTICE ON TRIAL
THE MOVIE

DIRECTED BY: MANN ROBINSON
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: CHAD LAWSON COOPER, HARRY LENNIX - VANZIL BURKE - RUDOLPH MCISSICK JR. - ANDREA HOLMES THOMPSON - CARLOS ROBERSON - ALICIA ROBINSON COOPER
STARRING: TODD BRIDGES - DAVID ARQUILLA - DORIEN WILSON - ALICIA ROBINSON COOPER - MARIA BOYNTON - JOHN GESMONDE - LANE HARPER - CHAD COOPER II - LUBBIE HARPER JR.

TWO CIVIL RIGHTS ATTORNEYS SUE THE U.S. JUSTICE DEPARTMENT FOR REPARATIONS AND DAMAGES DONE TO AFRICAN AMERICANS WHILE BRINGING BACK TIME TRAVELER WITNESSES TO TESTIFY. THE EVIDENCE IS THEN GIVEN TO A MIXED CULTURAL JURY TO DELIBERATE...

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2. SCROLL DOWN UNTIL YOU SEE PRE-ORDER MOVIE
3. CLICK PRE-ORDER MOVIE
4. ENTER YOUR DISCOUNT CODE, IF YOU DON'T HAVE A CODE YOU STILL CAN ENTER YOUR CREDIT OR DEBIT CARD INFO & YOU WILL RECEIVE AN EMAIL CONFIRMATION & LINK TO BEGIN WATCHING THE MOVIE AS EARLY 12.01 AM ON JULY 4.

(THE MOVIE WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR 48 HOURS AFTER YOU ACTIVATE THE LINK ON JULY 4TH)
IF YOU NEED ANY FURTHER ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CALL OUR OFFICE AT 212.786.6460....

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

LAW NOTES



Dr. Bridgette Baldwin is a Professor of Law at Western New England University School of Law with areas of interest in criminal law and procedure, international criminal law, evidence, critical race theory, cybercrime and welfare law.

The Covid-19 pandemic has strained our already weakened safety net. Some types of social assistance – from secular and religious groups and formal organizations to informal networks – have been able to keep up their work or even expand their reach. Others have been forced to contract or even close. Meanwhile, the need for help has increased. Some of us have new needs: for masks or hand sanitizer. Others, who had been managing, have found that the disease and the threat of disease have disrupted their survival strategies. In response, people have rediscovered old ways to help and be helped, while others have innovated. This column explores the importance of organized bartering and web-based mutual aid networks amidst today's coronavirus landscape.

Turning to Each Other in Times of Crisis

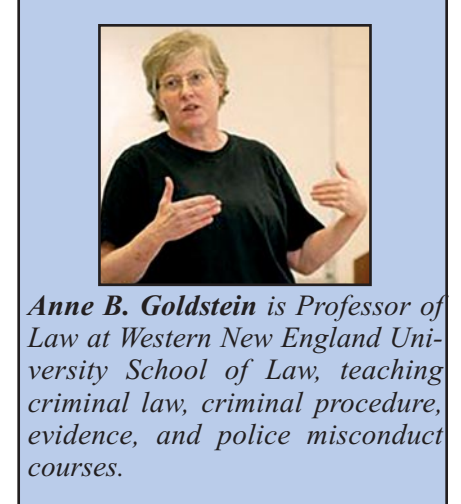
By Professor Anne Goldstein

Bartering – trading goods and services – has, of course, been around for a very long time. Bartering covers a wide spectrum, from the most informal friendly or neighborly habits of doing favors and sharing bounty to formal clubs with written rules and records. Organized bartering provides an opportunity to earn transferable credit. For example, when Amy babysits for Betty and receives in return lawn mowing from Carl or tax help from Darryl, everyone involved benefits without any financial debt or profits. Some clubs use tokens and others record keeping, to manage these arrangements. Typically, an hour's work at anything is worth an hour's work at something else, whatever the cash "market rate" for each job. When cash is short but time and energy abundant, bartering can be an important part of a local economy.

Sound good? TimeBanks has been promoting and facilitating bar-

tering clubs since the 1990's. A good source for information about joining, or setting up a bartering club can be found on the TimeBanks' website, <<https://timebanks.org/>>. Although bartering exchanges may seem tax-free as well as cash-free, the more formal the bartering arrangement, the less likely the barter will escape taxation. Exchanges of the same kinds of services, i.e. babysitting collectives are not taxable. But high-cash-value exchanges and exchanges of unlike services, i.e. legal help for house painting would be taxable. Additionally, if a bartering exchange is federally taxable, Massachusetts taxes it also.

Mutual aid is another form of social assistance. People help others for the satisfaction of doing what's needed or to return the favor of help from someone else. As with bartering, the same person may be both a giver and a receiver. The main differ-



Anne B. Goldstein is Professor of Law at Western New England University School of Law, teaching criminal law, criminal procedure, evidence, and police misconduct courses.

ence is that with mutual aid, the help is a gift. No direct exchange is expected. Web-based mutual aid networks are fairly new. Like bartering clubs, they connect people who didn't already know one another. Mutual Aid Hub, a national organization links to a Springfield network's website, <<https://www.wmacma.com/>>. The club serves Springfield and neighboring Massachusetts communities. In the end, the global pandemic has made visible longstanding gaps in our social safety nets. We now have the chance to take advantage of old strategies for helping each other in times of need. ■

YOUR VOTE COUNTS!!!

Trump Alerts!

By Marjorie J. Hurst



Photo submitted by a Facebook follower on 6/15/20

Several state races will be decided in elections on **Tuesday, September 1st**. You have until **Wednesday, August 12th** to register to vote. If you don't vote, if you give up your right to decide who will represent you,
YOU ARE VOTING FOR DONALD TRUMP—AGAIN!

EDITORIAL

FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

MY POINT
OF VIEW

Frederick A. Hurst



continued from page 1

crowd, carried my mind way back down memory lane to a time before he was born and his grandfather and great-uncles were rising to political leadership. He had that special Kennedy touch that had the crowd hanging on his every word. But, more significantly, like all the other dignitaries, he marched to the Nathan Bill park at the head of the procession and stayed until events ended on a warm note of camaraderie (see page 40).

A rumor circulated that one White public official did some scare mongering by discouraging some more gullible councilors from participating and warning all of the businesses in the small shopping plaza to board up their windows. His warnings were unnecessary and entirely inconsistent with the crowd's spirit.

I must admit that what impressed me as much as anything was the performance of the police, many of whom must have had to hold mixed emotions at the thought of providing services to a crowd protesting the behavior of some of their own in front of a restaurant known to be one of their favorite after-hours hangouts.

I was impressed by the police because they came in peace...at least for the most part. Somebody had ordered CJ's towing to park its trucks in the Nathan Bill parking lot presumably to tow the cars of the demonstrators. One of the first acts of the police was to send the tow trucks away. I arrived after the crowd had swelled and drove past the Nathan Bill parking lot and pulled into a neutral lot up the street hoping to avoid being towed or being shooed away by the police who I wasn't even sure would be present. When I saw a police officer guiding a car into the

Nathan Bill parking lot, I turned my car around, drove to the entryway and the officer politely gestured me in.

Other officers were directing traffic in both directions and, when the speaking ended and the march began, the police assisted those leaving in cars and they directed the march all the way to the Nathan Bill park where cruisers were positioned to hold back traffic when and where necessary. The police

If Mayor Sarno thinks that he can ignore, without serious consequences, the Black folks who we elected to office to represent us, two of whom were elected at-large by a diverse voter base and one of whom is president of the council, then he is wrong.

were unimposing, nonthreatening and very good at the job at hand, belying the mistaken notion that all cops are bad.

Of course, the rumors were rife. Folks talked about seeing armored cars parked on side streets. Some evidenced other police activity in the Saint Anthony's church parking lot. It was rumored to involve a fully dressed riot squad and national guardsmen as well as some from the state police. I can attest to the fact that something more was going on because I saw the activity but I cannot be sure of the details.

What I can be sure of is that anything beyond the helpful police presence at the event and during the march was overreach and, for that, Mayor Sarno should be ashamed, especially since, shortly after the march, he felt a need to apologize for his own insensitivity about concerns of the Black community that have been festering under his nose for years and many years before him.

If Mayor Sarno had any advisors of merit, they should have positioned him at the leadership of the protest and at the point of the march to the park side-by-side with other prominent leaders. But that is asking a bit much from a mayor who is not inclined to share the limelight...especially with people of color.

To the contrary, Mayor Sarno

seems obsessed by the need to control Black folks. A recent example was reported in a recent article in *The Republican* (June 26, 2020) in which Sarno took credit for a funding proposal that was presented to him by a group of Black city councilors, including the council president who, unbeknownst to the mayor, had the presence of mind to alert the press in writing about the council proposal and about his concern

that the mayor would submit the council proposal as his own without mentioning the council's role, which he did while falsely claiming the proposal had been produced in concert with other members of the Black community. It was an unnecessary and counterproductive deception but not unusual for a mayor who regularly demonstrates his contempt for those he wants to rule rather than serve, which is probably a reflection of the attitude of some cops who prefer subjugation of Black folks over protection.

So far Mayor Sarno has been given a pass by the Black community primarily because he is ever present at Black events with his smiley façade and warm handshakes. It has only been recently that folks have taken a more critical look at him and, altogether too often, he has come up wanting. How he could have appointed three White police commissioners in a row without input from the community he was elected to serve and ignored the community's persistent demand for an independent police commission is beyond me especially since all of his choices came from the ranks of the very police department the community wants to be seriously reformed.

His first commissioner was a known racist. His second choice lived out of town. And his third choice

sparked the current Nathan Bill controversy that sparked the mayor's post-demonstration public apology for his racial insensitivity and led to his promise of change that should have occurred long ago during his time in office...so long ago that we have no reason to believe that the changes he recently promised are anything more than a political illusion designed to trick people into believing that he really cares. I seriously doubt he does.

To the contrary, it appears by his recent behavior that Mayor Sarno is more interested in trying to pit Black folks against Black folks. It's an old, worn out White trick that he seems to think he invented. What he doesn't know is that Black folks picked up on that trick long ago and are sophisticated enough to defend against it, not by fighting each other but by foiling his bad intentions in ways that he can't even imagine. If Mayor Sarno thinks that he can ignore, without serious consequences, the Black folks who we elected to office to represent us, two of whom were elected at-large by a diverse voter base and one of whom is president of the council, then he is wrong.

I've been around and seen a lot which is why I was uplifted by the Nathan Bill demonstration and demonstrations like it around the country. All of them, even the naming of Juneteenth a national holiday, are necessary and tend to inspire change. But they are also primarily symbolic. And altogether too often the change they inspire is illusory or short lived. But voting power, when fully exercised, is far more enduring than symbolic power and is something no elected official or racist can ignore.

So vote! Vote on September 1st and November 3rd and in every single election thereafter and no politician will dare insult you or ignore you...including the current Springfield mayor who has never experienced the true power of an inspired Black vote. ■

OP - ED

Home Care Workers on the Front Lines Are Being Left Out

By Mattie Lacewell

Since the COVID-19 crisis began, I started direct care for Brenda, my 77-year-old relative, three times a day, helping her with personal care and taking her medications. Prior to the pandemic, she had been receiving home care services twice a day and attended an Alzheimer's day care program five times per week. However, with a lack of PPE and support for home care workers across the country, my brother and I no longer feel it's safe for her to see her regular home care workers. Now, I take care of Brenda, my sister-in-law – even though I'm 82 years old myself.

Our situation is not unique; there's a home care crisis across Springfield, our state, and the country. Home care workers provide essential care and support to the elderly and to people with different learning abilities – yet these workers are receiving no support from the state or federal government in the wake of COVID-19. Many other front-line workers are now receiving PPE, hazard pay, access to testing, and additional measures in the workplace to protect themselves in the wake of this pandemic. These are essential in a pandemic situation – and home care workers cannot be left out of this conversation.

COVID-19 has exposed the cracks in our healthcare system, and it's now falling apart at the expense of working people and elders. Many are rightfully avoiding visits to grandparents and other vulnerable populations, but home care workers still must provide essential care to elders. There's no way for this necessary care to go contactless; home care workers are on the front lines of this pandemic, working with the highest risk population, but their needs are being ignored while other health care workers receive critical access to testing and PPE.

If vital home care workers continue to go to work without PPE and access to COVID-19 testing, Brenda and our community are more at risk. But if Brenda stays home, many in our elderly population have to forgo the essential care they depend on. An 82-year-old woman should not have to take care of an 77-year-old, and a health care worker should not have to risk her safety to do her job. Yet that's the situation our elders and home care workers are being left to figure out.

As the president of the Springfield chapter of the Massachusetts Senior Action Council, I've heard from elders in our community who have stopped seeing their home care providers due to

these risks. I've heard from many more who are scared and don't know how to protect themselves and the workers they rely on.

Massachusetts families are being left with few options. Many don't have the means to find other ways to provide care for the elders in their family. And if home care workers have to stop working in order to protect themselves and their clients, their families are also hurt. The elderly population and health care workers are already at risk due to this pandemic; they need access to every resource to keep themselves and our community safe.

If other front-line workers in health facilities, grocery stores, public works, and food service can access testing and PPE, so should home care workers. We cannot pick and choose which workers in our community will get access to which protections. Home care workers are on the front lines of COVID-19. We cannot keep ignoring these essential workers or the populations they serve.

Mattie Lacewell is the Springfield chapter president of the Massachusetts Senior Action Council.



Mattie Lacewell

Letter on Police Matters

TO: City Council President Justin Hurst
CC: Point of View
FROM: Emurriel Holloway
SUBJECT: POLICE MATTERS
DATE: June 8, 2020



Emurriel Holloway

Councilman Justin Hurst,

It is essential that we move from training the police force to the **SELECTION** of those that we **PAY** to protect us and our communities. **PRIOR** to accepting people as cadets and certainly **BEFORE** we put them in uniforms and send them into the community to protect/kill us, they should have undergone and **PASSED** both **PSYCHOLOGICAL** and **RACISM** screening/assessments. There are instruments and people certified to do these type of assessments.

When we put "crazy," emotionally unstable, power-seeking/loving, insecure people in uniform, **NO** amount or training will fix the problem. These people need to do some other kind of work. When underlying **RACISM** is in certain individuals, it's a part of who they are—consciously or unconsciously. These people are **DANGEROUS** and **SHOULD NOT** be issued a gun and other weapons to use against us when they encounter us.

These two (2) requirements that I have cited should be instituted locally and **NATIONALLY**. The **PREVENTION** is less damaging and less costly than intervention. **IT'S TIME TO SOUND THE ALARM!** Please **SHARE!**

Thanks,
Emurriel

LETTERS TO THE PUBLISHER

Dear Marjorie and Rick:

Thank you so much for the June POV article on Stone Soul, it is greatly appreciated.

You know quite well what it is to put 30+ years into a project. You have experienced the ups and downs with the POV. Thank you for recognizing the efforts of a community-generated activity. We will be saluting you and the POV in the future.

Again, thank you for your efforts.

Gratefully,
Jay (6/19/2020)

Letters to the Publisher and other content **MUST** be sent electronically to: mjhurst@afampov.com
 (Please reference a subject matter or e-mail is automatically deleted.)

RELIGION

RELIGIOUS POINT OF VIEW



Dr. Atu White, Editor, serves as Pastor of the Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 33 Oak Street, Springfield, MA and as First Vice President of the United Baptist Convention of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire. atuwhite@gmail.com

In 40 years of life, ingrained and etched into my psyche is the belief that America is the superpower. America is the great bastion of hope. America is the supreme personification of democracy. America has the best economy in the world! America has the best healthcare system. America has the best educational system. America welcomes the tired, the poor, and the huddled masses. We are America. God Bless the USA. Every day as a school-aged child, I pledged allegiance to this dominance. I believed it.

Within this poem, aptly titled “The New Colossus,” Lazarus compares the ancient Colossus of Rhodes statue, which stood as a giant military figure towering over the city, with the Mother of Exiles that welcomes those tired travelers to experience the new America. For many immigrants, America has afforded them a life promised by the creators of the Declaration of Independence of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” but far too many Americans still yearn to breathe free.

Here is the reality—America is fragile! America’s fragility is of its own making. You cannot systematically hold a people down forever and think you will not get stuck down there with them. It is only a matter of time before America becomes like other great empires. Any system that is designed to hold the most vulnerable down will eventually fold, break, and crumble. Perhaps the words of Jesus say it best, “What you have done unto the least of these, you have done it unto me.” The pandemic exposed the need to respect and protect the most vulnerable in our society, like the overlooked essential workers, some of whom are legal and illegal

Yearning To Breathe Free

By Rev. Dr. Atu White

On the occasion of raising money for the construction of the pedestal for the Statue of Liberty, Emma Lazarus pinned these words:

**Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...”**

immigrants who work on farms.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragility of our nation. One lesson we all should have learned and should be learning is just how vulnerable our society is. For weeks in mid-March and early April the grocery store shelves were bare. At one point, our spotting a bald eagle on Main Street would have had a greater probability than our finding toilet tissue. Much needed rice, pasta and other sundry items were extinct—not on shelves. We quickly realized how valuable legal and illegal residents who staff meat packing plants are because the price of beef and chicken doubled and tripled in certain places. Dairy farmers discarded large amounts of milk, while other food items rotted in fields because restaurants and schools did not have a need to purchase them. Over 40 million Americans filed for unemployment, with many of those benefits set to expire at the end of July.

The pandemic is pulling the covers off police brutality through video surveillance, health disparities, unequal medical treatment, and the unspoken access to quality education. To complicate matters, financially, many are living paycheck to paycheck, and small businesses are surviving week to week. We are vulnerable! America lives and thrives

on borrowed prosperity.

You must consider what lessons you will learn and the disciplines you will implement during the pandemic and post-pandemic. You should begin with spiritual reflection, which requires us to:

Slow Down—Slowing down means to get comfortable with a new pace and rhythm. It means to unbusy yourself so that your mind and soul can catch up. Give yourself a chance to live in this tremendous and volatile moment.

Adopt a Mindset of Curiosity—This simply means to be uncomfortable with not knowing. It also means to ask relevant questions of yourself, your life, and the circumstances around you.

Take Personal Responsibility—This suggests you own your part. Most of life is a result of your own doing. If you want different outcomes in life, it begins with owning your attitudes, behaviors, and decisions.

Seek God’s Insight—This requires you to ask God to provide insight to your past, while giving you a greater sense of awareness to your future.

Do it Daily—Get into the practice of spiritual reflection. The more you engage in spiritual reflection, the more



you will enhance your life.

After we engage in spiritual reflection, we should begin exploring other possibilities and pathways forward. For instance, what is your personal plan and how do you want to emerge from this season of uncertainty?


Below are five areas I invite you to explore:

1. Entrepreneurship
2. Economic Freedom
3. Urban Farming
4. Self- Defense Training
5. Social Justice


In order for us to breathe free, we must act in our best interest to build ourselves person-by-person, church-by-church, community-by-community.

The pandemic has taken the breath of over 125,000 Americans. Corrupt police officers have taken the breath of innocent men and women, and police officers who remain silent amid the brutality of our citizens smother the breath of justice. The pain is taking our breath, and like Native Americans, immigrants who came through Ellis Island, and the entire family of the African Diaspora, we yearn yet to breathe free. ■

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THE ARTS

CHILDREN'S BOOK CORNER



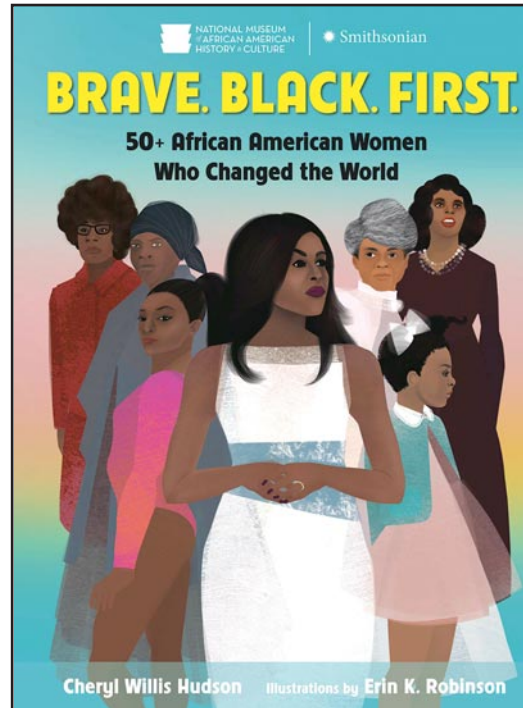
The Bookworm is **Terri Schlichenmeyer**. Terri has been reading since she was 3 years old and she never goes anywhere without a book. She lives on a hill in Wisconsin with two dogs and 11,000 books.

Step right up. When you want to be first in line, that's what you have to do: get in place at the head, let everybody else queue behind you, and lead them forward. You might have to show them how it's done. You might have to show some responsibility. Or, as in the new book **"Brave. Black. First."** by **Cheryl Willis Hudson**, illustrated by **Erin K. Robinson**, you might have to take some big risks.

Is it always good to be first? You might think so: you often get the best seat, the newest things, the nicest choice in a bunch of choices. But think about this: sometimes, being first is really hard.

Sometimes, it's downright scary.

Take, for instance, Ruby Bridges. When she was just six years old, she became the first Black child to attend what had once been an all-white school. She put on a brave face and marched into the school building but afterward, Ruby's dad lost his job and her grandparents lost their farm be-



cause she just wanted to go to school. Still, Ruby continued going day after day after day.

Being first might be a big honor, as it was for Barbara Jordan, "the first African American elected to the Texas state senate after Reconstruction, and the first African American from Texas

"Brave. Black. First."

By Cheryl Willis Hudson, Illustrated by Erin K. Robinson

c.2020, Crown \$18.99 / \$24.99 Canada 128 pages

Reviewed by Terri Schlichenmeyer

elected to the... House of Representatives. "And then there's Shirley Chisholm, who was the first Black woman elected to Congress and the first Black woman to try to be a Democratic candidate for the office of President.

The first American athlete to compete in the Olympics while wearing a hijab was Ibtihaj Muhammad. Ella Fitzgerald was the first African American to win Grammy Awards. Phillis Wheatley was America's first Black published poet. Ava DuVernay was the first Black woman to direct a film with \$100 million budget. Basketballer Sheryl Swoopes was the first Black female player to land a major shoe sponsorship. And though she's not the last in this book of firsts, Michelle Obama was America's first Black First Lady.

Sometimes, the easiest-to-learn lessons come in the smallest of doses. That's certainly the case inside "Brave. Black. First."



Author **Cheryl Willis Hudson**
Photo: **Stephan Hudson**

Indeed, this book leaps into its subject matter with no introduction, just biography, which is something young readers might appreciate since it won't overwhelm them with too much information. No, author Cheryl Willis Hudson gives them just enough to teach but also enough to keep them curious with a nice balance of biographies. Women from all walks of life, from many periods of history, all age groups, and with accomplishments in a variety of fields are represented, and Hudson includes tales of adversity as well as those of triumph. That, and draws-them-in artwork by Erin K. Robinson, makes this book accessible and meaningful for kids ages 8-to-12, and for boy readers as well as for girls.

"Brave. Black. First." is perfect if your child enjoys quick reads that are easily browsed and flipped-through. It's likewise great for the kid who loves inspirational biographies, so step right up. ■

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THE ARTS

PEN & INK



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Nature

By Juanita Torrence-Thompson

Birds wing through the sky
Stars disappear before dawn's
Lights flicker briefly

Summer sweltering
Penetrating through cotton
Lazing in the shade.

Heavenly moonbeams
Anchored on high, shifting now,
Showering the sky

Dance Haiku

Ballerinas prance
To the melodious beat
Stretching limbs skyward.

Seasons Change

By Berdia M. Brown



Berdia M. Brown

Our lives are as seasons.
God created seasons for reasons.
Hold fast, as these seasons won't last.
As humans, we go through seasons in life, which test our faith.
Some of us are anxious; we don't have the patience to wait.

When we rush ahead of God's time, we fail;
Simply because it's not our time to prevail.
We face seasons in life, which will make or break us.
This is the time to hold on to your faith.
At best this is only a test.

Seasons won't last, they will surely pass
God loves us so much, we must trust, and believe He is carrying us
through the seasons.
During these seasons, we must remain calm
Be faithful, be of good courage, and hold fast to His holy hands.

With our strong faith rooted in Him, "Peace be still" is His holy command.

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LIVING

GOT H.E.R.S.

Strong Black Woman, the Myth versus Reality

By Latoya Bosworth, PhD



Dr. Latoya Bosworth dubbed herself *Brenda's Child* in honor of her late mother. She is an educator, author, speaker, and self-esteem expert. www.brendaschild.com

It's the dangerous, thankless job we can't quit. It is ceaseless. Even after we've given our all, we are still bombarded with blame instead of the accolades we deserve. We make miracles happen every day. We are the glue, the hammer and the nails, which is why people disregard our pleas for respite when we say we are EXHAUSTED. We are Black women in America. Creators, Protectors and Defenders.

Creators – Science says so. We were here first; we have the DNA to prove it. Henrietta Lacks' HeLa cells are evidence our magic exists. Everything from modern gynecology (stemming from inhumane experimentation on enslaved women) to trends in fashion, hair and body types have been because of Black women. Trendsetter is an understatement. Yet, many of us are raising children without a partner (and being blamed for that as well). We have higher rates of HIV (heterosexual), are more likely to die giving birth, and die from more aggressive forms of gynecological cancers. The strong Black woman myth exists because we have no other choice. Who will create a healthy space for us? We are tired of burying our sisters and then crying in the bathroom while everyone else is asleep.

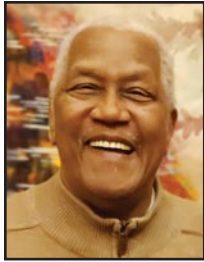
Protector – Nobody comes to the rescue of a Black woman like another Black woman. For centuries we adjusted each other's crowns and made

sure the hair underneath was hooked up as well. We show up for each other with hugs and comfort dishes, gather for laughter to ease each other's pain, to shower each other with compliments. The strong Black woman myth exists because we have no other choice. We must protect each other simply because, if not then who will?

Defender – Even when they mistreat, abandon, abuse or deny us, no one defends Black men like Black women. From Ida B. Wells' Anti-Lynching campaign to Black Lives Matter, we organize and show up to defend the Black man's right to exist. Even when they don't value each other's lives, we do. But our Black men didn't turn out for Sandra Bland like they did for Eric Garner, for Korryn Gaines like they did for Mike Brown, or more recently, Breonna Taylor like they did for George Floyd. How can one preach Black lives matter, but not include black women's lives? Instead, many defended R. Kelly and Cosby vehemently, while shaming victims (or denying them all together). In fact, Black women are more likely to be killed in domestic violence incidents. The strong Black woman myth exists because we have no other choice. Who will defend us?

There will be men who will read this, make more excuses, say things like *not all Black men, why did they wait so long to tell? If women let us lead, the system takes us away from you.* If this is you, you are the problem. The strong Black woman myth exists because we have no other choice. But we want to be safe, soft and vulnerable; we want you to match our energy. The reality is We Are Exhausted. ■

SPECIAL TO POINT OF VIEW



Robert Jones

JONES ANNOUNCES NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

SPRINGFIELD, MA – JUNE 22, 2020 – Robert Jones, President/CEO of First Time Home Buyers of New England, Inc. (FTHBNE), announced the launching of the *Navigator Program* in a news release from his agency today.

Mr. Jones, a longtime community activist, developed the program to assist first time home buyers with unresolved credit issues to qualify for mortgages and eventual placement in the “American Dream” of homeownership.

The program is designed to assist in the following ways:

- FTHBNE begins the *Pathway to Home Ownership* service with a complete review of the potential homebuyer’s credit history with a focus on the three major credit bureaus, Experian, Equifax and TransUnion. Here, they look to address any discrepancies in the report (s) and direct the client to the dispute centers, if appropriate.
- Next, FTHBNE will assist in the application process for a secured line of credit with a local lender in order to: (1) re-establish good spending

habits; and (2) improve the credit score.

With an average score of 540, it is the goal of FTHBNE to elevate the client’s score a minimum of 60 points, to reach a score of 600 plus, while at the same time reducing their overall debt. Efforts to reduce the overall debt include direct negotiations with creditors to (1) lower the interest rates on unsecured debt; and (2) stabilize the actual debt allowing for payments to be made in a timely manner. During this time period, which usually ranges from 60-180 days, FTHBNE will work with the client on an as needed basis to monitor progress and provide additional recommendations.

No other program works with clients to this extent or over this period of time in preparation of meeting the goal of home ownership. A critical component of the services is for the client to attend the Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-sponsored First Time Homebuyers Programs offered through Wayfinders and Springfield Partners for Community Action.

Completion of the program earns the participant a certificate entitling the holder a voucher with a potential value of \$15,000 towards the purchase of their first home. In addition, once qualified by virtue of an

approved credit score and completion of the HUD-approved First Time Homebuyer Program, the City of Springfield, through its Office of Housing, offers closing costs or down payment assistance in the form of a grant of \$4,000.

Once the homebuyer has met the established threshold in terms of credit enhancement, history of employment stability, income eligibility, and HUD-sponsored program completion, FTHBNE will introduce the client to the most appropriate mortgage lender in the area for consultation.

Other services offered include assistance to the client in the filing of the mortgage application in an effort to ensure all financial data is accurate and that the client is viewed in the most favorable circumstances by the lender.

Robert Jones stated, “This is a start-to-finish program assisting those often left behind to reach their goal of homeownership. We believe this is a first in the nation program and we are excited to launch Navigator in the greater Springfield region. Again, there is no cost for participants in the program.”

For further information, individuals are encouraged to contact First Time Home Buyers of New England @ 413-328-8542. ■

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GOOD NEWS



Jay Griffin,
Stone Soul Festival
Program Chairman
hayjay252@msn.com
Tel: 413-636-3881
or
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A great opportunity exists for the Mason Square, Old Hill, and the Greater Springfield community. When one door closes, another door opens. We are people of faith. We have love and goodness in our hearts. We believe the upcoming Stone Soul Festival will be the greatest one of all times. By September, Governor Baker will have the state of Massachusetts completely opened up.

The Governor is beginning to open the state for socializing, exercise and relaxation. We have missed visiting, traveling, and socializing for the last several months. We have tolerated the isolation and restricted travel during those months.

We need to prepare for the biggest community celebration in the year of 2020. We need to plan our community celebration of the Stone Soul Festival. This year the festival is scheduled for **September 4th – 6th**. We will know by

the first of August whether we can have a safe and secure festival. To do so, we need each community and organization to contribute to the Stone Soul Festival. We are asking each community organization to earmark some funds in their budgets for the festival. We would like our partners who have supported Stone Soul over the years to stay with us so that this community celebration can happen. We know that the supporters of the celebration will be contacted to be prepared for this great opportunity. There has been a revolution taking place in America. We have the power to make things happen. We will use text, Facebook, Twitter, Internet, media, etc. to exchange ideas and plans for the festival.

Listed below are some of the ways we need support for the three-day festival:

- * Entertainment for three days
- * Sound System
- * Security
- * Vendors
- * Platform for the stage in case the mega shell is not available
- * Contributions of food
- * Space
- * Refrigeration

- * Sponsors for Signs
- * Volunteers who are competent with social media (Internet, Facebook, Twitter), radio, TV, etc.
- * We want each church to take an active role in the 31st Annual Festival and are emphasizing and encouraging the churches to get involved.
- * Above all we need financial contributions—every nickel counts.
- * In general, we need sponsors for the various stages of the festival.

We would like to identify individual groups to assist with various aspects of the festival. The Stone Soul Committee will confirm the various organizations' contributions to the festival. Each sponsor will be identified and acknowledged for their support.

We have successfully completed 30 years of community celebrations. We have the talent and the will power to make this happen. We want the, September 5th parade to be the biggest pa-

rade ever. We know there are many groups and organizations that want to demonstrate their support for a community celebration. We feel the social service and health organizations should step up to the plate and help make this happen. We have gone forward based on faith. This is the right thing to do. We need to embrace, we need to enjoy, we need to demonstrate our love for each other and the community. Each sponsor can provide a representative on the Stone Soul Committee.

By September, Governor Baker will have Massachusetts completely open. This whole message is based on faith. This is a faith-based request to the community from the community.

Please contact the Stone Soul Committee at (413) 737-1485 if you have any questions or need additional information or send your inquiry via email to: hayjay252@msn.com.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL!!!



Members of the Springfield, Hartford and Boston chapters of the Buffalo Soldiers & Troopers Motorcycle Club and the Iron Horse Road House Motorcycle Riders from Western Mass participated in the National Ride For Justice, riding from the Basketball Hall of Fame to Spring of Hope COGIC. They were welcomed by Bishop Talbert Swan II, First Lady Cynthia Swan, City Councilor Jesse Lederman and church members.



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SPECIAL TO POINT OF VIEW

The Martin Luther King Jr. Family Services, Inc. Story – Part I*By Ed Cohen*

The story of Martin Luther King Jr. Family Services, Inc. (MLK) is truly inspirational. As the parable in the Gospel of Mark reads: “How will we liken the Kingdom of God? Or with what parable will we illustrate it? It’s like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, though it is less than all the seeds that are on the earth, yet when it is sown, grows up, and becomes greater than all the herbs, and puts out great branches, so that the birds of the sky can lodge under its shadow.” Matthew (13:31–32), Mark (4:30–32), and Luke (13:18–19). What started out as a mustard seed so many years ago has surpassed the vision of the dedicated volunteers and become a jewel in our community, helping the community to survive even in these difficult times we now endure.

Before the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic in March, the agency with its many programs served over 750 consumers weekly. Its services are comprehensive and include Family Support Services, a Youth Tobacco Prevention program, Youth Gambling Photo Storytelling, the Mason Square Health Task Force, the Clemente Course in the Humanities, Good Vibes – Gun & Gang Violence Prevention Program, Health Matters Nutrition & Good Health Promotion, Community Health Worker Program, Annual Community Resources Fair, the Annual Social Justice Awards, the expanded Emergency Food Pantry, a host site for Food Bank of Western MA Mobile Market, a Youth Basketball League, a Summer Camp, the Summer Teens Daze & Nights Youth Development Program, and the Afterschool and Nite Spot programs.

Currently due to COVID-19 limitations, the organization provides Family Support – Dept. Child & Family Services, the Emergency Food Pantry with a host site for Mobile Food Market, a Grab & Go Lunch Program for senior citizens, and Health Matters Nutrition & Good Health Promotion in addition to other critical supports. The Home Delivery Program was added in April with support from Baystate Health to support elders who are shut in and/or home bound due to the pandemic.

The MLK story began with the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Presbyterian Church and

continues to page 33*Ed Cohen*

May 1991 - Dora Robinson, director of the MLK Jr. Community Center, cuts the ribbon at the grand opening of the center. Present are Dorinne Sneed, Timothy Sneed, former director Donna Ivy, Anne Bailey and Rev. Dr. Edward Harding.

SPECIAL TO POINT OF VIEW

The Martin Luther King Jr. Family Services, Inc. Story – Part I

continued from page 32

‘Project Mustard Seed’. Recognizing that the community was in dire need of services, the Martin Luther King Jr. Fellowship House was established in 1978 and provided a food pantry, tutorial services, a basketball program, the Black College Tour, and the youth cultural educational organization. The programs outgrew the Fellowship House and Rev. Dr. Ronald Peters used “Project Mustard Seed” as the vision for fundraising for the construction of a community center on what would become the church’s campus. The initial committee included Elders Joseph and Mary Nicholson, Mary Spencer, Flo Witherspoon, Donna Ivy and many others. Funds were raised from within the church and the greater Springfield community, and financial pledges were obtained from corporate sponsors. Richard Neal was mayor at the time and Raymond Jordan was state representative and they helped secure the land and had the houses that were on the property relocated so construction of the center could begin.

The Project Mustard Seed church committee transitioned into the MLKCC Board of Directors with Helen Dyer serving as its first president. With leadership from the board and the church’s then Pastor, Rev. Dr. Edward Harding, the center was built and opened as the MLK Jr. Community Center (“Center”) in 1988. The Center’s first executive director was Donna Nelson Ivy who was followed by Dora Robinson who presided over the Center’s opening in 1988.

When asked about her experiences as executive director, Dora Robinson said, “We opened the Center in 1990. We just had a building. We had no furniture, just some folding tables. The foster grandparents would come after school for the tutorials. There were a host of non-paid volunteers and a dedicated board and church and community volunteers. Maybe two weeks before the Center was scheduled to open, I got a call from (Richard) Dick Stebbins and he said, ‘We’re closing down one of our banks. Do you still need furniture?’ We got a truck and that’s where we got our desks, tables and chairs. Dick Stebbins did so much for the community center. Every year he would ask what three things do you need and he would make it happen.”

Timothy Sneed became the board chair when the Center officially opened. Dora remarked, “His background was finance and he did all the books for the community center as a volunteer and provided tremendous leadership. We always had great friends.”

When the Center opened, the various programs transitioned from the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Presbyterian Church Fellowship House to the MLK Jr. Community Center. The Center became a nonprofit organization initially, as the Martin Luther King Community Center. It later became qualified as a United Way organization and could raise funds through qualifying for campaign funds. Dick Stebbins and BayBank were a major contributor and supporter.

Early on the structure didn’t exist for the Cen-

ter to receive state contracts so Dora relied on the generosity and support of her former employers, the Center of Human Development and the Urban League. “We partnered with New North Citizen’s Council and they became our fiscal conduit so we could apply for grants through them. They would get the grant and subcontract with us until we got enough capacity to secure our own grants,” explained Dora. She added, “Then eventually we had a great partnership with the South End Community Center. We used to call ourselves the Triangle: North End, South End and Mason Square.”

Dora continued, “In those early days we were 95% volunteer driven because we really didn’t have any money until we started getting state and federal contracts. We cannot overlook the support we received from the Davis Foundation. As we started growing, we were expanding our mission and we started moving into social services. We started to receive private, state, and federal grants, and contracts with the Mass. Dept. of Public Health, Department of Transitional Assistance, and the Department of Mental Health and Disabilities and Retardation, etc. We were becoming a full-service family organization. We were beginning to look at ourselves as a multi-service organization which led us to change our name from MLK Jr. Community Center to MLK Jr. Family Services.”

....To be continued in August POV



The MLK Jr. Family Services Emergency Food Pantry and Mobile Food Market currently serve over 430 members a week.



The 2019 MLK Jr. Family Services Black College Tour departure. Since its inception 37 years ago, the Black College Tour has taken over 1600 students to visit Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU).

COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY FOCUS



I Found Light Against All Odds Holds 3rd Annual Awards Ceremony

SPRINGFIELD, MA – As the 2019-2020 school year ended and students continued to feel frustration with missing out on celebrations, 16 students had an opportunity to have the recognition that they deserved amidst Covid-19.

Sixteen students from the High School of Science and Technology's Fresh Start Program received awards that celebrated their completion of high school and all the hard work that they put forth during their four years. For half of these students, this day was especially important because they are first generation high school graduates. These students persevered

through many obstacles to get to graduation and they truly deserved to be honored for their accomplishments.

This event, the 2020 I Found Light Against All Odds Awards Ceremony, took place at the Basketball Hall of Fame on Saturday, June 13th at noon. The ceremony was held outside on the lawn. Paul Lambert, Vice President of Enshrinement Services & Community Engagement of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame, along with "Boomer" from the Springfield Thunderbirds were on hand to congratulate these students as well.



L to R kneeling: Gary Berthiaume, Emanuel Concepción, Jaylyn Williams, and Eric Rodriguez.

Top Row L to R: Luis Zambrano, Alexandra Gomez, Keeyana Brown, Fatuma Rage, Stephan Davis, Jomarielys Fuentes, Tamiya Coleman, Alize Marciano, and Iysiss Sutherland.

I Found Light Against All Odds is a local non-profit organization whose mission is to support and impact at-risk youth and their families through various resources. CEO and President, Stefan Davis, is committed to inspiring all youth and families and spreading light when they are in dark-

ness.

Davis states, "Our youth don't care what we know until they know we care."

For more information, Mr. Davis can be contacted at 413-505-4629 or ifoundlightao@gmail.com. ■

VOTE



YOUR VOTE COUNTS!!!

Register to Vote by
Wednesday, August 12th
in order to Vote in the Tuesday,
September 1st state election.
Contact your city or town Election
Office for more information.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR — JULY 2020



Jynai McDonald,
POV Community
Calendar Editor
Please submit your
events with attn:
Jynai in the
subject line to
info@afampov.com

July 2 (Thursday)

Fat Girls Hiking Western MA

Virtual Wellness Circle

Where: Online

When: 7PM–8PM

Info: www.eventbrite.com

July 3 (Friday)

First Friday Networking and Party-ing

Where: Smokey Joe's Cigar Lounge
395 Dwight Street
Springfield, MA

When: 6:15PM–11:45PM

July 3 (Friday)

Climate Activists for Racial Justice

Where: Hadley, MA

When: 10AM–12PM

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B084DAFA623A6FC1-climate>

July 4 (Saturday)

Women's Bible Study-Summer Closure Hosted By: Cottage Hill Church

Where: Online

When: 10AM–12PM

July 4 (Saturday)

Vigil for Social Justice

Where: Center Church of
South Hadley
1 Church Street
South Hadley, MA

When: 10AM–10:30AM

July 11 (Saturday)

Community Syringe Pick-Up

By Tapestry

Where: 306 Race St., Holyoke, MA

When: 10AM–12PM

July 14 (Tuesday)

Credit Success Workshop (Webinar)

Hosted By: Way Finders

Where: Online

When: 5:30PM–9PM

Info: www.wayfinders.org/training-center

July 25 (Saturday)

Education Matters Scholarship

Hosted By:

Parent Villages, Inc.

Where: Virtual Celebration

When: 11AM

Info: 413-285-3757 or
www.parentvillages.org

July 27 (Monday)

Springfield Information Session

Foster MA - Massachusetts DCF

Where: 140 High Street
Springfield, MA

When: 4PM–5PM

July 31 (Friday)

Women In Business Summit

Where: 635 New Park Avenue
West Hartford, CT

When: 8AM–4PM

Info: www.wibsummit.com

Tuesdays

Virtual Childbirth Education with Deep Relaxation

Where: ZOOM

When: 6PM–7:30PM

<https://tinyurl.com/y394tpte>

Thursdays

Holyoke Farmers Market

Where: Veterans Park
Holyoke, MA

When: 1PM–5:30PM

July 23 - July 24

Two-day Anti-Racism Workshop

By NCCJ

Where: Online

When: 8:30AM–4PM

Info: diversity@nccj.org

July 9 - October 10

Tribe Runner Training Program

Sudor Taino Group Fitness by Karla Medina

Where: 635 New Park Avenue
West Hartford, CT

When: 6PM–7PM

Info: 860-952-9015 or

sudortaino@live.com

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EDUCATION

SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Springfield School Volunteers



SSV Offers Free Online Summer Read Aloud For Springfield Families

*Local authors to read their
books online for Springfield
Public Schools children*

SPRINGFIELD, MA - June 18, 2020 – Springfield School Volunteers (SSV) is hosting a special online author edition of its popular Read Aloud program **Wednesday, July 8 through Wednesday, Aug. 5**. Local authors are partnering with SSV to read their published works online for

FREE SUMMER ONLINE READ ALOUD

LOCAL AUTHORS
READING THEIR OWN STORIES!

Every Wednesday from **July 8 to August 5**.



SPRINGFIELDSCHOOLVOLUNTEERS.ORG



free to promote literacy and a love of storytelling this summer.

“Read Aloud is one of SSV’s most beloved programs and has been our way of promoting literacy and a love of reading for nearly 35 years,” said CEO Denise N. Cogman. “Like many of you, we have had to get creative because of the changes these unprecedented times have brought about. When deciding whether a virtual Read Aloud was something we wanted to try, we thought about the fact that there are many digital read aloud platforms available online. Then we realized we are fortunate to be part of a community with many talented authors who just might be willing to let us help them share their stories with young people.”

Cogman said while students, parents and teachers will be looking forward to this historic school year coming to a close, hearing a good story is always a welcome break. “We hope that hearing stories from authors who are from right in their backyards will have the added benefit of encouraging some of our young people to explore their creative sides as well,” Cogman added.

Each Wednesday from **July 8 to Aug. 5**, SSV will share an online Read Aloud session featuring the very author who wrote the book. Parents and their youngsters can tune into the online Read Aloud, at springfield-schoolvolunteers.org, to enjoy a children’s story by Western Massachusetts authors **Crystal Senter-Brown** (“*Gabby Gives Back*”), **Keshawn Dodds** (“*Menzuo: An Epic Superhero Fantasy Adventure Series*”), **Joannie Duris** (“*B is for Berkshires*”), **Richard Michelson** (“*Fascinating*”) and **Lisa Papademetriou** (“*A Tale of Highly Unusual Magic.*”) Each video will be accompanied by the recommended grade level as well as more details about the author. For more information, visit springfield-schoolvolunteers.org. ■



SPS Forges Ahead With A 3-Pronged Plan for Back To School



June 25, 2020 – Springfield Public Schools will develop three separate back-to-school plans—one for return to full in-person instruction with safety requirements, one for full remote learning, and one for hybrid learning that combines in-person and remote learning, Superintendent of Schools Daniel Warwick announced today.

“Our primary concern is the safe return of students and staff for teaching and learning,” said Warwick. “We fully understand that there are still more questions than answers, but we are working with guidance now that will help us move forward.”

Warwick made his comments following today’s release of initial guidance from Governor Charlie Baker’s office and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). War-

wick said his team assembled within hours of release of the guidance today to review its impact on Springfield Public Schools. He pointed out some key points included in the DESE guidance today:

- Current medical research supports a safe in-person return to school – with preventive measures in place – as infection and transmission rates are lower for children than adults.
- Preventive measures include masks/face coverings, physical distancing, handwashing, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces.
- Masks/face coverings will be required for all students in Grade 2 and above and for all adults; they are recommended for students in Grade 1 and below.

- Based upon current medical research, and in conjunction with other preventive measures, a minimum physical distance of three feet has been established.

“As the global coronavirus pandemic continues to evolve and change rapidly, we understand these initial guidelines are subject to change and do not address every topic. However, today’s guidance provides a good start for our planning purposes and we applaud the level of thought and care that went into its development,” said Warwick, adding that DESE indicated a need to remain flexible and nimble and ready to adapt to all three models based on current medical conditions as they unfold. ■

EDUCATION

LOCAL COLLEGES IN THE NEWS



Springfield Technical Community College

STCC Plans Mix Of On-Campus Low-Density Labs and Online Courses for Fall

SPRINGFIELD, MA – June 1, 2020 – Springfield Technical Community College this fall will offer a combination of on-campus low-density labs using social distancing protocols as well as online instruction.

Dr. Geraldine de Berly, Vice President of Academic Affairs, outlined summer and fall semester instruction plans in an email shared with the campus community today.

Instruction plans were made in light of the Commonwealth's four-phased approach to reopening the Massachusetts economy.

Dr. John B. Cook, STCC President, said students will continue to receive a high-quality educational experience from the most affordable college in the city.

"Our efforts to adapt given the COVID-19 pandemic have been comprehensive," Cook said. "I am confident this plan offers the best set of options for our students; the decisions we made were difficult, but thoughtful, and were driven by the health and well-being of STCC students, faculty and staff."

STCC, the only technical community college in Massachusetts, offers upwards of 90 programs, many of which are unique to the region. In addition, students avoid student loan debt, and find opportunity and more in STCC's multiple bachelor's degree transfer options. The college is known for its state-of-the-art laboratories and equipment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs, as well as a nationally recognized patient simulation facility used by students in its acclaimed health programs.

"STCC has no intention of becoming a fully online institution. The pivot to online is driven by a health pandemic," de Berly said. "COVID-19 has forced the college to adjust,

and we do hope in the future to return to the robust utilization of campus facilities which include our labs, specialized equipment, unique technologies and the rewarding in-person experiences STCC faculty generate with and for students."

For the fall semester, SHPS will deliver courses and programs using a combination of low-density instruction and online, with gathering size set in accordance with state and federal social distancing guidelines. Programs in the school include nursing, dental, respiratory, medical imaging, rehabilitation studies and medical laboratory technician.

The School of STEM will offer courses that include online, online with video conferencing in real time,

and on-campus low-density labs. Programs in the School of STEM include fields of study such as engineering transfer, computer and IT security, mechanical engineering technology, energy systems, optics and photonics, electrical engineering technology/robotics, architecture building technology, graphic design, and digital media.

All courses in the School of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies (LAPS) will be taught online. Administrators decided to convert all classes in LAPS to online as a response to the need to limit campus density and population. Many of the classes in the School of LAPS are lecture-oriented, which lend to the decision to go fully online, Vice President de

Berly said. Two-year programs include business transfer, criminal justice, early childhood education, urban studies, applied psychology, social work and more.

In certain instances, STCC will use "synchronous" teaching strategies, which means students gather with their instructor at a specific date and time through video conferencing. But most of the classes will be taught using an asynchronous approach, which gives students greater flexibility to set their own hours to complete their studies and assignments.

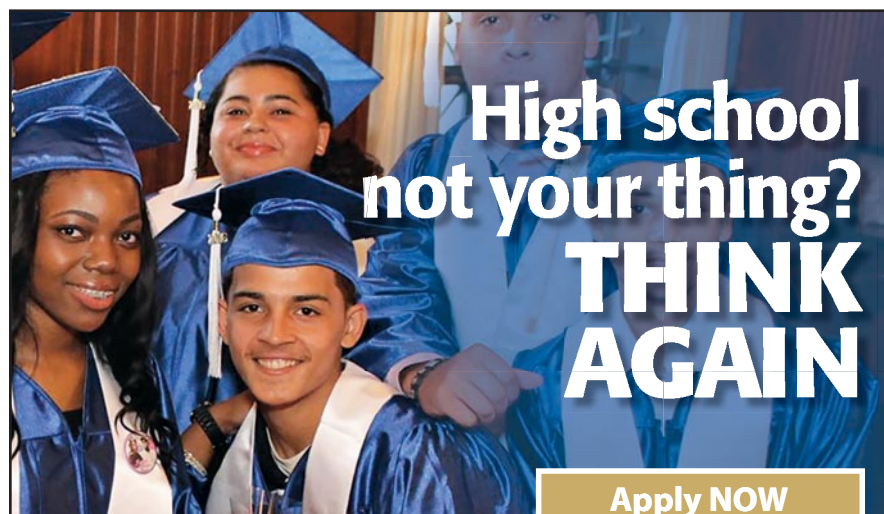
"Many of our students have childcare obligations, work commitments, and a host of other complicated circumstances," Cook said. "We know that our students benefit from having flexibility in their class work, and online is yet another way STCC lives its mission of ensuring access to higher education."

Cook said he was impressed with the way the faculty transitioned during the spring semester when the COVID-19 emergency forced the college to make sudden adjustments.

STCC offers professional development resources for faculty, including support and training through the Center for Online and Digital Learning.

"I applaud our faculty for their resiliency over the past several months," Cook said. "They showed tremendous dedication and commitment to our students, and were resolved during an unprecedented time in our history as an institution. I truly appreciate their efforts to help students transform their lives."

Interested in applying to STCC? Visit stcc.edu/apply or call Admissions at (413) 755-3333. ■



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GATEWAY to COLLEGE

EDUCATION

LOCAL COLLEGES IN THE NEWS

HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Pinning Pride

HCC celebrates nursing graduates with virtual pinning ceremony

HOLYOKE, MA – June 3, 2020 – Holyoke Community College nursing student Tessa Kemp got a lot more than she expected as she pulled into the parking lot of HCC's Center for Health Education & Simulation on Tues., May 26, her first trip back to campus in weeks due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

She had driven all the way from her home in East Brookfield just to pick up her nursing pin, a symbol of her completion of HCC's associate in science in nursing degree program.

More than that, though, she was greeted by clusters of green and white balloons, decorated cars and posters celebrating HCC's ASN Class of 2020, with more than half a dozen members of the HCC nursing faculty clapping and cheering her on.

"I was a bit stunned," Kemp said. "I thought we were just picking up pins for Thursday night. I had no idea so many of the professors and support staff would be there."

One by one over three hours that afternoon, all 31 members of HCC's ASN graduating class of 2020 drove through the lot to pick up small care packages in advance of their virtual pinning ceremony, which was held over Zoom on Thurs., May 28.

Kemp seemed overcome for a moment as she rolled down her car window so nursing instructor Natalie Alexander could hand her a clear, cellophane bag that included her nursing pin, a candle, cup, and a printed program that included The Nightingale Pledge that graduates recite as they are initiated into the nursing profession.

"We decided to do this because the students felt they lost a lot with the COVID virus," nursing professor Karen Aiken said the day of the pin pickups. "They couldn't finish their clinicals as they normally would. Everything was at home for the last six to eight weeks of the semester. The pinning ceremony is



Kayla MacDonald of Chicopee picks her pinning pack at the Center for Health Education & Simulation May 26.



HCC nursing student (now graduate) Tessa Kemp of East Brookfield accepts her pinning pack from nursing instructor Natalie Alexander outside the Center for Health Education & Simulation.

a very traditional event in nursing, going back to the 1800s, so we wanted to recognize that. We wanted them to have their pins so when we Zoom you could

actually see each student being pinned."

Because they couldn't have a traditional live procession during the pinning ceremony, each of the graduates submitted photos of themselves wearing white uniforms that flashed across the screen in succession. As their names were called, each of the graduates was pinned at home by a person of their choosing.

There was also a slideshow of student reflections, award announcements, a ceremonial candle-lighting, and remarks by HCC president Christina Royal and others including class president Michael Tanner of Northampton.

"For many of us," Tanner said to his classmates, "these last two years were the most challenging years of our lives so far ... and when we finally neared the end, the world was determined to try and stop us with a pandemic, so we did what nurses do best: adapt and finish the job. We pioneered our way into remote learning and finished strong, proving that if we can make it through this, we can make it through whatever curveballs nursing will throw at us." ■

Stay home
Stay safe
Stay on track



ONLINE
CLASSES
AT HCC

FALL CLASSES START
SEPTEMBER 8

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HOLYOKE
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

EDUCATION

LOCAL COLLEGES IN THE NEWS

Westfield
STATE UNIVERSITY

Westfield State Announces Plan for Safe Fall Opening

WESTFIELD, MA – June 19, 2020 – Westfield State University President Ramon S. Torrecilha, Ph.D., announced today the University's plans for its Safe Fall 2020 Opening. He wrote in an email to students, faculty, and staff that the upcoming semester will include a blend of on-ground and online academic instruction, as the University welcomes back commuters and residential students. The first day of classes is Sept. 2, 2020.

Torrecilha's announcement included overall information on enhanced health and safety preparation and protocols; academic learning and teaching modifications; general announcements regarding housing, dining services, and athletics; and the University's continued contingency planning amid the ongoing uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We anticipate a portion of classes to be delivered in a hybrid fashion, involving both on-ground and online components, while a substantial number of classes will be delivered exclusively online. On-ground classwork will be implemented with proper social distancing and other health and safety precautions," wrote Torrecilha, who also mentioned the University's plans to de-densify residential halls to limit the use of shared facilities and common areas.

More specific information on academic schedules and housing will be shared with students in the weeks ahead.

According to Torrecilha, work is underway to modify campus environments—including academic buildings, dining spaces, and residence halls—to support social distancing and uphold health protocols. Should the need arise, the University will des-

ignate areas for isolation and quarantining of students who exhibit signs of, or have had, direct exposure to COVID-19.

Cloth masks will be required to be worn by all individuals without prohibitive health conditions and six feet of social distancing, when possible, will be enforced. Hygiene and social distancing protocols will be prominently displayed on signage throughout the campus. Enhanced cleaning protocols and frequency will be implemented this summer and continued throughout the fall semester, with a particular focus on high-touch surfaces and high-traffic areas. Protocols are in line with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines.

Torrecilha praised the ongoing work of the Westfield State's Safe Opening Task Force, Emergency Response Team, and divisional working groups, all of which have been instrumental in contingency planning leading up to today's announcement. All groups will continue to play a critical role in finalizing finer logistical and operational details.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the Westfield State Emergency Response Team's Coronavirus Management Group has managed continuity in the face of the global pandemic. In addition, the Safe Opening Task Force was convened with representation from all University divisions and unions to review the guide-

lines, standards, and protocols put forth by CDC, OSHA, and the American College Health Association (ACHA). The task force used these expert sources combined with the guidance and directives of Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker, the state Department of Higher Education, and state Department of Public Health to present scenarios for the fall opening for the University's senior leadership to consider.

Administration came to their decision on the fall semester with careful consideration of the following:

1. An ability to provide an environment with proper health and safety precautions;
2. A favorable downward trend of the data related to COVID-19 in Massachusetts;
3. A commitment to provide a high

quality, engaging student experience;

4. A capacity to be flexible given the uncertainties related to the pandemic;
5. A commitment to ensure continuity.

"We continue to appreciate the patience and understanding of students and families as we ensure thoughtful and careful measures to welcome our students back to campus in September. Every decision will be carefully considered and will reflect the University's top priority—the health and well-being of the Westfield State community," said Torrecilha.

Following today's announcement, frequently asked questions, resources, and timely updates will be posted to the Safe Fall 2020 Opening webpage. ■

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for a country that finally values
and protects Black lives.
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