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THE STAR OF ZION

APRIL 2025 | VOL 149 NO. 4 | STAROFZION.ORG | THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE A.M.E. ZION CHURCH



BISHOP

GEORGE E. BATTLE JR.

Official Voice of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

The Star of Zion is an award-winning newspaper and journalistic media organization, published by The A.M.E. Zion Church as its official organ since 1876.

Being guided by the core values of truth, faith, and love, the Star seeks to raise the consciousness of readers with news that is current, relevant, and dependable.

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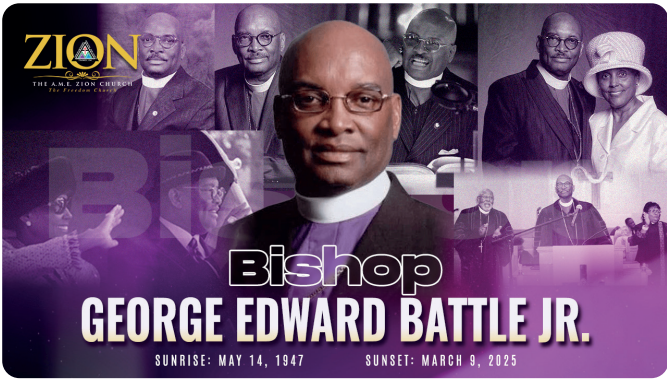
OPINION

The Pilgrim from Pinetops

By Dr. Da'Tarvia Parrish, Faculty Assembly President, Livingstone College

Bishop George Edward Battle Jr. entered eternal rest with his family at his side, on Sunday, March 9, 2025. He was 77 years old.

The funeral arrangements for Bishop Battle included visitation Sunday, March 16 at Greater Gethsemane



A.M.E. Zion Church in Charlotte from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., service Monday, March 17 at Livingstone College starting 11:00 a.m., and internment Tuesday, March 18 at Charlotte Memorial Gardens, 10:00 a.m. All A.M.E. Zion churches were asked to drape the center pulpit chair in black until April 8; and in lieu of flowers, whosoever will, are asked to give to the Greater Enrichment Program, an after-school and tutorial initiative established by Bishop Battle that serves children in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade, at 2035 Patton Avenue Charlotte, NC 28216, 704.334.8518.

As Battle lay in repose, thousands paid their respects to the 84th Bishop in the line of succession of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, who was also deemed an extraordinary North Carolina statesman. A servant-leading visionary, Battle's devoted commitment to others and his community, warranted his receipt of the *Order of the Long Leaf Pine*, the highest honor reserved by North Carolina governors to citizens who have made significant contributions to the state. Battle's exemplary service is extensive; and to denote a few, he served as commissioner and Board member of Carolinas HealthCare System, co-founder of the Urban League of Central Carolinas, former chairman and Board member of Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board and Charlotte-Mecklenburg NAACP, and founder of the nonprofit Biddleville Housing Corporation that built and renovated homes in the Biddleville-Five Points community to increase homeownership. A graduate of Clinton College, Livingstone College, and Hood Theological Seminary, Battle is a top donor at these institutions establishing permanent programs that will permeate positive impact for generations.



People, organizations, and institutions bestowed honors and tributes to Battle, reflecting their gratefulness



Mrs. Debra Chappelle-Polk
Zion Spotlight Editor
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A.M.E. Zion Church, Inc. & A.M.E. Zion of Kingston, NY, receive Grants Preserving Black Churches



By Dana G. Stilley, Financial Freedom Editor

The African American Cultural Action Fund at the National Trust for Historic Preservation has selected The A.M.E. Zion Church Inc., headquartered in Charlotte, NC, and The A.M.E. Zion Church of Kingston, NY, as recipients of the 2025 Preserving Black Churches grants. The February 24th announcement included 30 historically Black Churches that will receive a total of \$8.5

million to advance the preservation of houses of worship. The grants, ranging from \$50,000 to \$500,000, were given to churches in 19 states, from Alabama to California.

The Black church has been at the center of the Black community since the end of the Civil War. A safe space for worship, the Black church also serves as a center for education, political activism, and social services. Recognizing the continued impact of the Black church on the Black community, the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund established the Preserving Black Churches program in 2023. Since that time, over 100 congregations have benefited from the program. Designed to mitigate the challenges of deferred maintenance, insufficient funding, and aging congregations, the \$60 million initiative is backed by generous philanthropic support from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The A.M.E. Zion Church of Kingston, NY, received a \$100,000 grant to create better ADA accessibility and support a planning project to preserve the building. The Pastor, Rev. Mary Shelly Bruce, is thankful that prayers have been answered. She said, "God answered our prayers. We

feel the movement of the spirit, and I want to remind everyone to stay encouraged, whatever you may be going through." Maisha Tyler, the church secretary, also shared that the church has been working diligently to increase the funds available to make emergency repairs and create a more inviting space for the community at large. The congregation is rejoicing at the opportunity to move forward.

The A.M.E. Zion Church Inc., by way of the Church Growth and Development Department, received a \$500,000 matching grant. Dr. Eleazar Merriweather, the executive director of the Church Growth and Development Department, said the grant will be used to establish a denomination-wide Preservation Endowment. Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Presiding Prelate and Senior Bishop of The A.M.E. Zion Church, said: "Dr. Eleazar Merriweather should be commended for his visionary leadership in securing this grant. It is an amazing opportunity for The A.M.E. Zion church to take church growth and development to another level. It will however require us to do our part in securing funds to optimize the amount of the grant that will come to this department for the work of church work and development."



Rev. Dr. Merriweather noted that the grant funds will have a significant impact on the future of The A.M.E. Zion Church, especially those facing significant challenges. The immediate goal is to work efficiently to finalize the proposal to raise the matching funds.



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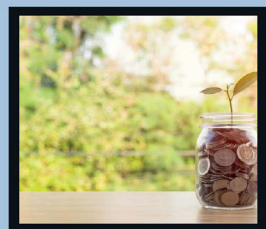
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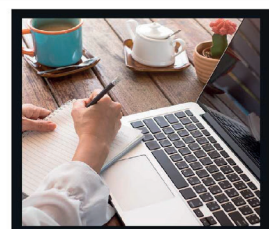
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Official Statement

Official Statement from the Board of Bishops Regarding the Death of Bishop George Edward Battle, Jr.

*"And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in YOU."
(Psalm 39:7 NLT)*

We, the Board of Bishops of The A.M.E. Zion Church, acknowledge with great sorrow the passing of our colleague and former Senior Bishop, Bishop George Edward Battle, Jr., who passed away on yesterday, Sunday, March 9, 2025.

Bishop Battle was elected our 84th Bishop in the line of succession at the 44th Quadrennial General Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, in July 1992. Upon his election, he was assigned to the South Atlantic Episcopal District, and upon the death of Bishop Herman L. Anderson, he also served the Central North Carolina Conference and the Virgin Island Conference. In 1996, he was assigned to the Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District, where he served for eight years. In 2004, he was assigned to the Northeastern Episcopal District, where he also served for eight years. In 2012, he became our Senior Bishop and was assigned to the Piedmont Episcopal District, where he served for nine years until he retired in 2021. He continued to be a vital part of the Board of Bishops even during the five years of his retirement.

Having served as an active Bishop for 29 years, Bishop George Edward Battle, Jr. will take his place in history as one of our longest-serving active bishops. He was not only an evangelist, pastor, bishop, and Christian servant; he was a great philanthropist, a community leader, a champion for education, and a social justice advocate. We acknowledge that, indeed, a prince and a great man in the A.M.E. Zion Church has fallen, but he is now in the presence of his Lord, whom He served with all of his heart. He will be greatly missed.

We offer our sincere prayers and condolences to his faithful and loving wife, Mrs. Iris Battle, their children, George Edward III and LaChandra, their grandchildren, and a host of other relatives, friends, and community associates, all of whom he loved so dear. We applaud Mrs. Iris Battle for how she cared for him during his illness. Further information on the celebration of his life and legacy will be shared as soon as it is available.

*"Servant of God, well done!
Rest from thy loved employ;
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy master's joy."*

Submitted with Sorrow,
The Board of Bishops of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

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Bishop Kenneth Monroe, Retired
Bishop Dennis V. Proctor, Retired
Bishop Michael A. Frencher, Sr., Retired

DONE THIS THE 10TH DAY OF MARCH 2025

Continued from pg 2

for his service as a social justice and healthcare advocate, a community leader, a church leader, and a committed believer and follower of Christ.

Battle spent over five decades as a pastor and Bishop, preaching the gospel of Jesus and serving marginalized groups, earning him the respect of thousands.

The Service of Triumph

Livingstone College hosted the funeral service for Bishop George Edward Battle Jr., with Retired Senior Bishop, the Right Reverend George Washington Carver Walker Sr., presiding.

A tribute to Battle's legacy of faith and service, welcomed thousands virtually and in person who attested to the rareness of a man who walked in humility and grace.

Emphasizing the primacy of God's Word and reminding people of God's character and actions, the *Call to Worship* by Bishop Walker, comprised of Old Testament scriptures Isaiah 55:1 and Psalm 48:11-14. Bishop Melanie Miller, presiding prelate of the Western Episcopal District delivered the *Invocation*, celebrating the life of Bishop Battle and thanking God for Battle's ministerial impact. She continued asking God to "bless us with the salve that soothes the aches of loss," and to bless us in carrying forth the legacy of Battle that has been left in our hearts and minds.

In the spirit of the writer of Lamentations, Bishop Dwayne A. Walker, presiding prelate of the Alabama-Florida Episcopal District, reminded audiences, "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not," as he lined and led the congregation in the *Hymn of Praise*, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," followed by Retired Bishop Warren M. Brown, who led the Affirmation of Faith with a collective declaration of the Apostle's Creed.

Bishop Anthony N. Witherspoon, presiding prelate of the Southwestern Delta Episcopal District rendered the Old Testament scripture, Psalm 139. Acknowledging the continuity of God's Word, congregants stood in song to the *Gloria Patri* as Bishop Brian R. Thompson, Sr., presiding prelate of the Mid-Atlantic Episcopal District followed with the *Gospel* reading of Matthew 6:25-34; and Retired Senior Bishop Kenneth Monroe read from the *Epistle* to the Romans 14:7-9.

Recognizing the unity of human kinship, Bishop W. Darin Moore, presiding prelate of the Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District offered the *Prayer of Comfort* reminding worshipers "We need to know we are not alone. . . squeeze gently [the shoulders of neighbors] some hope to let them know they are not by themselves. We are all connected in this sacred moment." He continued to highlight God's unfailing love and thanked God for the bond of George and Iris Battle, and the fruits of their union.

The Choirs sang "My Hope is Built" followed by Tributes from a variety of organizations touched by the testament of service and community uplift of the late Bishop Battle. Tributes included; Mrs.



Wilhemenia Rembert of the Greater Enrichment Program, founded by Bishop Battle in 1975, Mr. Eugene Woods, Chief Executive Officer of Advocate Health, Mr. Jerry McCombs, Chaplain of the Connectional Lay Council, Mrs. Sandra B. Crowder, International President of the Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society, Dr. Jimmy R. Jenkins, Sr., former president of Livingstone College, Retired Bishop Michael A. Frencher, Sr., for Hood Theological Seminary, and Rev. Dr. J. Elvin Sadler representing the General Officers of The A.M.E. Zion Church.

"Three hours wouldn't give me enough time to say everything I need to say about this man," stated Dr. Sadler, but nothing was left unsaid as contributors discussed, while at times mimicking Battle's voice, the bishop's spirit of love, joy, peace, and kindness, and his life as a witness to faith, service, and support. Battle's unselfish devotion to deeds, his outreach and fiscal generosity, and his recognition that education is more than degrees and diplomas, but an opportunity to unlock potential and change lives, was elevated denoting Battle as a leader of leaders. From the establishment of the first faculty-endowed chair in Old Testament Studies and Scholarship at Hood Theological Seminary to being the largest single alumnus donor at Livingstone College, Battle was a maverick for education, a leader of social justice, and a lover of God's people whose legacy will inspire generations to come. Woods of Advocate Health shared that 10 million dollars in scholarships have been established in Battle's name to support future generations in attendance at the Wake Forest School of Medicine in Charlotte. He concluded, "Bishop Battle was a spiritual architect of community. He laid brick upon brick to create foundations of hope, justice, and service."

The South Carolina Hymn Choir, another gem co-founded by Bishop Battle, sang "Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah" led by a 16-year-old vocalist filled with old-time religion that rocked and moaned all assembled.

Tributes continued with a dear friend, Rev. Dr. Clifford A. Jones, Sr., who said, "I didn't lose a friend. A friend has made a transition. George is a friend." He continued referencing biblical friendships highlighting there is one character in the Bible referred to by God as a friend. He attested, in Isaiah 41:8, Abraham was a friend of God. Jones reaffirmed, "The Lord lifted George from a humble beginning because God loved George. George loved God, my friend. What is our consolation . . . What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer."

Rev. Dr. David Williams who served as the retired bishop's pastor shared a community lore stating, "Greater Gethsemane is the house that Battle built." Williams joyously spoke of the various community engagement programs established by Battle 50 years ago while Battle served Greater Gethsemane as pastor. Williams said, "He was a pastor of the first magnitude." Through the lunch program, the Greater Enrichment program, and multiple occasions, "our hearts have been blessed by his presence . . . youth know they have a future and purpose in life."

Rev. Dr. Wardell Henderson expressed on behalf of the Presiding Elders of the Piedmont Episcopal District, deep appreciation for the gift Bishop Battle was to The A.M.E. Zion Church and the world. His leadership and longevity in Zion, weathered times producing wisdom



and faithfulness as God moved in his ministry and elevated him to lead others. Henderson said, "Bishop Battle served with distinction, embodying every essence of a true shepherd. His leadership was marked by his generosity, his care, and his unwavering commitment to the work of the kingdom. He gave freely not just of his resources. He gave of his time. He gave of his love. He gave of his wisdom. He gave of his faith, whether it was in the pulpit or the board room."



Chair for the Connectional Budget Board, Bishop W. Darin Moore recognized Dr. Shirley Welch who served by Battle's side as the Chief Financial Officer of The A.M.E. Zion Church. Moore continued acknowledging Battle's ability to balance the fiscal responsibility of the church with impeccable insight. "When it came to the church's money, he stood on business," Moore upheld as he acknowledged Battle's strategies to build confidence in others and position them to navigate spaces and explore uncharted territories. "He inspired all of us," said Moore. "I got through doors just because of Bishop Battle's name . . . Psalm 22:1 says A good name is more desirable than silver and gold."

Retired Bishop Dennis V. Proctor gave voice of sentiments on behalf of the Board of Bishops citing Battle as, "The most extraordinary, ordinary person." Proctor shared stories of Battle's efforts to expose church leadership to corporate entities and his unique way of breaking barriers through community representation. Proctor continued saying, "He told us it was alright to be gracious. It's better to give than to receive. He showed us that we need to treat all the compliments we get from people like perfume. It's better to inhale than to swallow." Generous with his time and family, Battle's love for others is reciprocated by his family as Proctor declared, "You are our family because of the Love we received from Battle. May our love last forever."



The grandchildren of Bishop Battle, Glynn (Trey), Alexander (Alex), Peyton, George (Eli), and Michael Chandler emotionally shared their individual love stories about their Paw Paw and deemed Battle was perhaps in heaven preaching a sermon to the Lord about the Lord.

Battle's daughter LaChandra shared her father was the ultimate girl dad. As a graduate of Livingstone College, LaChandra recalled Bishop Battle preaching the Baccalaureate service for her graduating class, remembering the title of Battle's address, "To LaChandra's Class." She continued, "So to you my dad, thank you for always treating me like I was the queen of the house. Thank you for always showing me what it's like to give. Thank you for showing me love . . . Love you dad."

George E. Battle III's acknowledgment of the greatness of his father included an excerpt from the poem "A Psalm of Life" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, saying "Lives of great men all remind us we can make our lives sublime, and departing, leave behind us footprints on the sands of time," while sharing his father's humility in leadership quoting the Bishop, "There are no big I's or little U's." Furthermore, on behalf of the Battle family, George thanked Livingstone College, the Board of Bishops, and "...everyone who is here, everyone who sent a message, who has visited, who has brought food, who has prayed for us, made a call, touched our hands, hugged us, thank you so much. It may seem small to you, but it means so much to us. Your kindness is immeasurable and will never be forgotten."

Bishop Eric Leake, presiding prelate of the South Atlantic Episcopal District submitted *Acknowledgements* of the ecumenical community

including Bishop Gregory V. Palmer of the United Methodist Church, Retired Senior Bishop Adams Jefferson Richardson, Jr., of the A.M.E. Church, and Bishop D. Williams of Christian Churches Together. Leake stated, "There are many letters, cards, and resolutions that have been received," while reading a select two Resolutions: first from the Piedmont Episcopal District of The A.M.E. Zion Church highlighting Battle's dedication to Christ in character, his preaching the gospel, and his selfless giving. Battle led Piedmont to liquidate the depth of Camp Dorothy Walls in Black Mountain, North Carolina which was later named in his honor as the Walls Battle Conference Retreat Center, and Battle addressed the arms of diversity, equity, and inclusion by breaking gender barriers and promoting women in leadership.

The Resolution from the Board of Bishops recognizes the former senior Bishop as an active episcopate for 29 years who was the chairman of the Board of Trustees at Clinton College, Livingstone College, and Hood Theological Seminary. The Board names Battle, "A prince and a great man" in The A.M.E. Zion church who has fallen but is now in the presence of the Lord. Battle will take his place in history as one of the longest-serving active bishops, "Not only as an evangelist, pastor, and Christian servant but a great philanthropist, community leader, champion of education and a social justice advocate."

As Battle was an extraordinary man in leadership, the unwavering loyalty and active love of his devoted and queenly wife of 55 years, Mrs. Iris Miller Battle gave, comforted him throughout his journey until the end.

Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr., Senior Bishop of The A.M.E. Zion Church and presiding prelate of the Piedmont Episcopal District shared "... seven of the twelve active bishops on the Board of Bishops were blessed to be under the episcopal tutelage of Bishop George Edward Battle Jr., and Mrs. Iris Battle," whereas the program eulogist, Bishop Daran Mitchell is one of the seven, as he engaged in the *Presentation of the Eulogist*. Starnes shared that Mitchell, the preaching guru, served under three of four episcopal districts with Battle, and Battle loved to hear Mitchell sing and preach.

Bishop Daran H. Mitchell, presiding prelate of the Mid-West Episcopal District led the *Hymn* "O Thou in Whose Presence" and delivered the *Eulogy*.

Like many Mitchell shared, "He [Battle] took a chance on me almost 26 years ago and I'm grateful he saw in me what I couldn't see in me," before rendering an encomium and panegyric heartfelt tribute, leaving a lasting impression on the audience by acknowledging death as a life journey and celebrating the remembrance of Battle's life through his work, worth, and witness.



Mitchell quoted the late Bishop Alfred G. Dunston Jr., saying, "The angel death is never idle and never silent because he has much to do. He is well mounted and well seated and can appear upon the scene suddenly. While at the same time, he can hover low and travel with measured slow steps where need be. He posts over the universe and makes camp among the living for it is among the living things that the angel of death finds his God-appointed appointment." Mitchell encouraged the congregants to praise God for Battle, "A gift from the Eastern sector of North Carolina that blazed a path around the world and left for us a legacy that will outlive his lifespan." He continued, only Bishop George E. Battle could gather us beneath thy maples and thy oaks at Livingstone College. "He has summoned us here to remind us of just how sacred and how precious this moment is . . . only God could saturate this place with the favor God can entrust with a pilgrim from Pinetops to bless the world."

Referencing Hebrews 11:13-16, Mitchell stated, “George Edward Battle Jr., saw from a distance.” Mitchell asked, “What are you living for?” while challenging the congregants to not only get right but get ready. A bold assertion can give you a blessed assurance.

Bishop Mitchell painted Bishop Battle’s prayer life and how that foundation shaped the way he gave, the way he preached, and how he practiced a life of faith. Anecdotaly, Battle’s action reminded Mitchell of a story about NBA All-Star Michael Jordan, who when asked, “How is it that you can go so high in the air and reach so far toward the goal? Michael Jordan replied, it was not in my feet, it was in my knees. If I bent my knees at the right time, I could go higher than before.”

Bishop Mitchell closed with a story of travel regarding the personal mannerisms of Bishop Battle. Battle exited airplanes and immediately ripped off the tags from his luggage at Baggage Claims, stating, “This is my reminder that this trip has come to a close. I don’t need these tags because I’ve already been there. I’ve already done that. I’m ripping off these tags and I’m getting ready for the next trip.”

Bishop Mitchell **moved**, “He ripped off the tags from Rocky Mount to York County. He ripped off the tags from Clinton College to Mount Vernon. And he ripped off tags from Center Emmanuel and Emmanuel Chapel. He ripped off the tags when he got to Foundation and Tabernacle. But he wasn’t finished. He went to Mt. Zion Lancaster, and he ripped off the tags, from Foundation Tabernacle. But he wasn’t finished. He went to Gethsemane, and he ripped off the tags from Mt. Zion Lancaster. And then in 1992, he was elected Bishop in the church. He went to South Carolina; he ripped off the tags from Gethsemane church. And went to South Carolina, but he wasn’t done. He went to Eastern North Carolina, so he ripped off the tags from South Atlantic. But he wasn’t done. He went to Northeastern, so he ripped off the tags from Eastern North Carolina. But he wasn’t done. He came to Piedmont, and he ripped off the tags from Northeastern Episcopal District. But he wasn’t done. He went to General Conference and ripped off the tags from Piedmont District. But last, one last Sunday when he got done with his work, he ripped off his tags and bid this world farewell. . .”

Mitchell closed stating, “From a distance, we see a brighter tomorrow. From a distance, we see glory overhead. From a distance we see Bishop George E. Battle, going before us, but they can’t crown him until we get there. Amen.”



The steadfast team of Bishop George E. Battle Jr. included many, with special recognition to Janice Jones, Joyce Lovett, and Rev. Rodney Courtney, whose commitment can be summed up in scripture, Romans 12:10-11, “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.”

All joined in voices for the *Closing Selection*, “Hallelujah Chorus,” and the *Recessional* “God Be With You Til We Meet Again.” Afterwards, Bishop Mitchell pronounced the *Benediction*.



The repast was hosted in New Trent Gymnasium at Livingstone College.

Da’Tarvia Parrish serves as the Faculty Assembly President for Livingstone College and was a proud recipient of the Bishop Battle Scholarship as an undergraduate student at Livingstone.

Bishop Dwayne Walker and Missionary Supervisor Donna Walker Join Little Rock Church

By Dianna Davis

Bishop Dwayne A. Walker and Missionary Supervisor Donna Walker Join Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church.

What a joyous occasion it was on March 2, 2025, as Bishop Dwayne A. Walker, Presiding Prelate of the Alabama-Florida Episcopal District of The A.M.E. Zion Church, and Missionary Supervisor Donna Walker officially became members of Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church.

For two decades, Bishop Walker faithfully pastored Little Rock, leaving a lasting impact on the congregation and the community. Though they could have chosen any church, the Bishop and Missionary Supervisor selected Little Rock as their spiritual home—a testament to the strong bonds they have built over the years.

The momentous event was marked by a warm and heartfelt welcome from Dr. Derrill A. Blue, Pastor, and Rev. Paula Blue, along with the ministers, officers, and members of Little Rock. With open arms and



hearts filled with gratitude, the church embraced its newest members, celebrating their return to a place so deeply connected to their ministry.

Bishop Walker’s legacy at Little Rock is one of unwavering dedication, spiritual leadership, and a commitment to uplifting the community. His pastoral service shaped the church’s mission and outreach, fostering a spirit of unity and faith. As he and Missionary Supervisor Donna Walker embark on this new chapter as members, their presence will undoubtedly continue to inspire and strengthen the congregation.



The joyous occasion was not only a homecoming but also a powerful reminder of the bonds of faith that unite the Little Rock family. With their official membership, Bishop Walker and Missionary Supervisor Walker reaffirm their commitment to the church’s mission, ensuring that their legacy of service and devotion continues to flourish.

Welcome home, Bishop and Missionary Supervisor Walker!

CELEBRATING THE LIFE & LEGACY OF DR. HAZEL NELL DUKES

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Star of Zion Spotlight Editor

March 2025 (Harlem, NY)... On March 1, 2025, Dr. Hazel Nell Dukes passed away at age 92. For over seven decades, the Civil Rights Icon was an advocate for racial diversity, equity, inclusion, and social change. Dr. Dukes frequently worshipped and spoke at Mother A.M.E. Zion Church on West 137th Street in Harlem, New York. Before addressing the congregation, she always recited Psalm 34: *"I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth."*

Dr. Dukes, affectionately called Mother Dukes, left very explicit instructions concerning her homegoing service. One of them was that the service be held at Mother Zion with Reverend Dr. Malcolm J. Byrd, Senior Pastor at Mother Zion, officiating. She also requested that Reverend Dr. Roslyn McCallister Brock, Associate Minister at Alfred Street Baptist Church and NAACP Chairman Emeritus, serve as Eulogist.

The two-day celebration of Dr. Hazel Nell Dukes' life and legacy began on Tuesday, March 11th, with a public viewing as thousands filed past her mahogany casket to pay their respects. On Wednesday, March 12th, mourners filled the pews from the lower sanctuary to the balcony for her homegoing service. Many were seated in the overflow room in the Fellowship Hall and were able to watch the live video of the service.

Reverend Dr. Malcolm J. Byrd, Senior Pastor at Mother A.M.E. Zion Church, led the Processional of Clergy and Family. At the beginning of the service, Reverend Byrd said, "Today, Dr. Hazel Dukes will be funeralized. Please pray for her son and family and all who mourn her death. She was dear to me."

The service participants were Reverend Violet D. Lee, PhD; Reverend Kimberly Cope-land, Immediate Past President, Metro-Manhattan, New York Links, Incorporated; Reverend Shavon Arline-Bradley, President and CEO, National Council of Negro Women; Reverend Dr. S. Raschaad Hoggard, Executive Chief of Staff, Office of the President, Borough of Manhattan Community College offered the Prayer of Comfort. Pulpit guests included Bishop George D. Crenshaw and retired Bishop Dennis V. Proctor.

As she requested, one of her favorite hymns *"Great is Thy Faithfulness"* was beautifully sung by Carla Ransom.

Family members shared endearing stories about Hazel. Her sister, Laura Smith, said Hazel's "footprints are etched in the Civil Rights Movement. This is a better world because Hazel was in it." God-daughter Melessia Walker read a letter she wrote, which ended with, "Rest in peace, Auntie, your work here is done." Cousin Thoman Faniel said, "One of her most endearing qualities was her ability to be a voice for the voiceless. Her loss is deeply felt by all those who knew her; she leaves behind a legacy of hope." He sang a few bars of *"May the Work I've Done Speak For Me."*

Dr. Dukes was a founding member of the Assembly of Prayer Baptist Church and spearheaded efforts to secure funds to purchase land and construct a new church. Reverend Monte Chandler, Pastor of Assembly of Prayer Baptist Church, said Hazel Dukes was a remarkable woman and will be missed.

Dignitaries, politicians, elected officials, community leaders, and activists packed the church to say goodbye and pay tribute to the Civil Rights Icon.

President of the NAACP New York State, L. Joy Williams, thanked Dr. Dukes for her leadership and for preparing her for leadership.

Reverend Al Sharpton, President and Founder of the National Action Network (NAN) reflected upon his long friendship and association with Dr. Dukes. "Hazel would go to jail for a good cause, and she never failed to stand up for others no matter what the issue was. I don't know how long we have to go, but I know we owe it to Hazel to take bigots out of the White House."

Marc H. Morial, President and CEO of the National Urban League, said he was proud to be one of her many "children" and for her sage advice. "May her legacy live on and the causes she fought for endure." He said, "With Ronald's permission, the National Urban League will name one of the conference rooms The Hazel Dukes Room."

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, 67th United States Secretary of State, spoke about her friendship with Dr. Dukes and what an honor it was to present her with the NAACP 108th Spingard Award in 2023. "It was hard to say no to Hazel," who, along with Charlie Rangel and others, convinced her to run for president in 2016. "It seems especially cruel that we would lose a trusted friend and a leader in a voice like Hazel's... I think many of us will find ourselves in the days ahead, wishing we could pick up the phone to hear what she had to say, get a word of encouragement because she never wanted to give up and she wouldn't want us to give up either."

Kathy Hochul, NY State Governor, enjoyed a long friendship with Dr. Dukes. "She was always there for me during challenging times. That's what she's known for. She didn't give up on her friends, and when she embraced you, she was there even when others were attacking. She was your best defender," In January 2023, Dr. Dukes made history as the first layperson to administer an oath to a governor. Hochul promised that Dukes' memory would be immortalized on the Million Dollar Staircase in Albany.





New York City Mayor Eric Adams echoed the sentiment: “Hazel came in when others were leaving.”

Hundreds of members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) paid tribute to Dr. Dukes, who in 1977 became the president of the NAACP New York State Conference, having served as president of the Great Neck-Port Washington Branch until her death. From 1989 to 1992, she served as National President of the NAACP.



Members of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated and Links, Inc. held private services honoring their esteemed Sister. Rev. Byrd asked members of the NAACP, Links, Inc., and Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. to stand. The entire lower sanctuary stood.

Before Reverend. Roslyn McCallister Brock delivered the eulogy, and soloist Chris Weaver sang a stirring rendition of “*Never Would Have Made It*,” accompanied by Dr. Gregory Hopkins, Artistic Director, Harlem Lyric Theater & Opera Company.



Rev. Brock said, “But by the grace of God, I’m what I am, and in this moment of DEI backlash, I make no apologies for my race or for my color. I’m standing on business today.” She gave honor and praise to God and greetings to Reverend Byrd, Bishop Crenshaw, Bishop Proctor, and pulpit guests and extended her condolences to Ronald, Janet, and her family.

Reverend Brock said, “We come to this house today to celebrate the extraordinary life and legacy of Dr. Hazel Nell Dukes.” She reminded everyone that Dr. Dukes had planned her homegoing service three years ago and “demanded that it be no longer than 30 minutes long.” Everyone laughed. “Dr. Dukes believed that if you didn’t tell her how you felt about her while she was living, don’t try to tell her now ‘cause she can’t hear you.” Everyone laughed again.



Reverend Brock then asked, “What can be said about that little girl who was born on March 17, 1932, in Montgomery, Alabama, that has not already been said? Hazel Dukes was a woman who shaped history; a woman who challenged it and demanded that it rise to an equal standard of justice.” Reverend Brock said she was reminded of Joshua 1:9, “*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.*” Reverend Brock said this scripture is a fitting testimony to the life of Mother Dukes, who was a woman of courage and led with unwavering faith and determination. “Hazel knew that the fight for justice was not for the faint-hearted. Hazel showed up at every march, every demonstration, believing that the people were the real source of change.” When others grew weary, Mother Dukes pressed on, “knowing that God she served would be with her every step of the way.”

Reverend Brock thanked Ronald for sharing his mother with us. Mother Dukes was a warrior. She lived out the words to the song, “*If I Can Help Somebody Along the Way, Then My Living Shall Not Be In Vain.*”

Reverend Brock said, as she was slipping away, Mother Dukes clapped her hands and reached out to God, “*I Will Bless The Lord At All Times: His Praise Shall Continually Be In My Mouth.*” Mother Dukes was marching to God with every clap. “So, as we lay her to rest, let us walk forward knowing that the God she walked with is walking with her now.”

Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Senior Pastor, Grace Baptist Church, Mount Vernon, NY, and the Chairman of NAN, pronounced the benediction. The service closed as the choir sang, “*For Every Mountain, You Brought Me Over, For Every Trial, You’ve Seen Me Through, For Every Blessing, Hallelujah, For This I Give You Praise!*”

Dr. Dukes was a beacon of hope and inspiration, demonstrating that actions often speak louder than words. She leaves to cherish her memory, her only son, Ronald Lewis Dukes, daughter-in-law Janet Davis Dukes, family members, and a host of friends.

Dr. Dukes received a police escort to her final resting place at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, New York.

In 2003, Edwards Street in Roslyn Heights, the street where Dukes challenged discriminatory housing practices decades earlier by moving into Roslyn Gardens, was renamed “Dr. Hazel Dukes Way” in her honor.

The Homegoing Service can be viewed on the Mother A.M.E. Zion Facebook page.

Greensboro District Holds Third Mass Meeting – Conference Year 2024-2025

By Mrs. Nina R. Ingram

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” Micah 6:8 (KJV)

The Greensboro District Women’s Home and Overseas Missionary Society held its third Mass Meeting of the Conference Year on Saturday, January 25, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. at Troy Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Troy, NC, where the Pastor Reverend Dr. Tyrone Rigsby and his congregation served as meeting hosts. The Buds of Promise (Buds) and The Youth Missionary Society (Y’s) were the program participants for the first part of the meeting. These departments are led by Superintendent of Buds, Mrs. Tamekia Lockhart, and Secretary of Youth, Mrs. Janice Spearman, respectively.

The Order of Service began with the procession of Buds and Youth. The devotion participants were as follows: Markell Ingram, Call to Worship/Invocation; Scripture (Micah 6:8) - Morgan Greene, followed by a Prayer for Equity – Jazetta Shamberger; and a Prayer for Justice – Brandon Bell. Following prayers, Wesley Chapel Children’s Choir provided musical selections. Beautiful welcome remarks were extended by Nassem Keosouna.

The BUDs and Youth provided celebratory presentations in honor of Missionaries Marie L. Clinton and Victoria Richardson. The Buds presented their History, Colors, Pledge, and Motto information led by Superintendent of Buds Mrs. Tamekia Lockhart, and an ‘Equity and Justice Skit’ entitled, *Equality and Justice*, written by Mrs. Pamela Watson-Cook. Several Buds received special honors.



The Youth provided presentations on very informative themes led by Secretary of Youth Mrs. Janice Spearman. The themes included gerrymandering, police misconduct against people of color, capital punishment, disproportionate discipline against Black students, LGBTQ discrimination, and

gun violence. The theme titles were displayed on beautiful signs along the front of the sanctuary. Youth Trinity Thomas and Tamiya Ward presented a dance interpretation; King Tweed presented the Youth History, while Landen Clinton, Trinity Thomas, and Tamiya Ward provided a presentation on Symbolisms and Rituals. An unjust interpretation was presented by Peyton Whithers, Morgan Greene, and King Tweed. Additionally, Secretary Spearman lifted up equity and justice expressions of her late beloved husband, the Reverend Dr. T. Anthony Spearman, longtime A.M.E. Zion pastor whose philosophy as related to the themes was ‘The Time to Act is Now.’ The first part of the meeting ended with a prayer about the themes by Reverend Dr. Lisa Caldwell and a congregational selection, “*Lift Every Voice and Sing*.”

The second part of the meeting included the business session. Ms. Dwan Covington provided the courtesy report expressing thanks to Troy Chapel for their hospitality. Ms. Phyllis Marshall provided the attendance report/Banner Awards. The following churches received recognition banners: Mt. Airy (Lower level), Hood Chapel (Middle level), and Wesley Chapel, NC (Upper level). The offering was received, and the finance report was presented by Mrs. Linda Goins.

Missionary President Dr. Edna Adams-Fulton expressed gratitude and appreciation to all participants, including the very creative work of the Buds and Youth as initiated through their leaders, Superintendent of Buds Lockhart and Secretary of Youth Spearman. Following the announcements, the third Missionary Mass Meeting was adjourned with the Missionary Benediction. A wonderful lunch was served in the Fellowship Hall.



Local Community Rallies Behind Grace Kitchen to Combat Food Insecurity

Raleigh, NC — March 4, 2025
By Rev. Latoya Parmele

Located in the heart of Raleigh’s College Park neighborhood, Grace Kitchen stands as a beacon of hope and resilience. In response to the rising challenges of food insecurity and homelessness, this faith-based initiative remains dedicated to providing relief through its mission of compassion and service. Founded in 1997, Grace Kitchen has consistently addressed the community’s most urgent needs. Today, under the



leadership of Pastor Nathaniel B. Cox and continuing the legacy of his predecessors, Grace Kitchen is expanding its reach and impact with unwavering dedication.

With increasing demand, Grace Kitchen has launched an ambitious fundraising campaign to raise \$20,000 by March 2025. The funds will support essential initiatives, including the provision of hot and cold meals, securing critical supplies and equipment, and sustaining a dedicated team of staff and volunteers. “Our mission is inspired by the story in 1 Kings 17:15, which reminds us of the power of faith and community in action,” shared Mother Mary Wiggins, Kitchen Manager of Grace AME Zion Church Kitchen. “Just as the widow’s jar of flour and oil never ran dry, we believe that together, we can ensure our



resources continue to flow for those in need.”

Donations can be made at various levels—\$50, \$100, \$250, or \$500—through Grace Kitchen’s campaign page at www.waygiver.com/campaigns/3101. Every contribution is a step toward fulfilling the vision of a

more equitable and compassionate community.

A Legacy of Compassion and Commitment

Nearly three decades ago, Grace Kitchen began as a small-scale initiative to combat hunger in the College Park area. Today, it stands as a cornerstone of community support, serving between 125 to 170 meals three days a week. Beyond its primary function of meal provision, the organization embodies a broader mission of fostering dignity, empowerment, and hope among those it serves.



Each week, a team of dedicated volunteers prepares meals with care and love. From hearty stews to fresh salads and warm bread, the food represents more than sustenance—it symbolizes the community’s unwavering commitment to its most vulnerable members. “These meals offer more than nutrition,” said Dr. Orlice Hodges, a long-time member of Grace Church and Grace Kitchen volunteer. “They offer connection and a sense of belonging.”

The Power of Community Partnerships

The strength of Grace Kitchen lies in its network of supporters, which includes local businesses, schools, and faith-based organizations. This collective effort underscores the transformative power of community action. The Food Bank of North Carolina, for instance, has been instrumental in organizing food drives and volunteer initiatives. “Collaborating with Grace Kitchen has deepened our understanding of empathy and service,” said Dr. Hodges. “It’s inspiring to see young people engaged in meaningful work that uplifts others.”

A Vision for the Future

As the needs of the community evolve, so too does Grace Kitchen’s

vision. Plans are underway to expand its services and reach more individuals. Key initiatives include:

- **Weekly Grocery Distribution:** Providing families with bags of groceries to ease financial strain.
- **Educational Workshops:** Offering classes on nutrition, meal preparation, and financial literacy to empower community members with practical skills.
- **Mobile Meal Services:** Delivering meals to individuals who face mobility challenges or other barriers to accessing the kitchen.



“Our goal is not only to feed but to uplift,” Dr. Hodges emphasized. “By equipping people with tools for long-term stability, we aim to create lasting impact.”



How to Support Grace Kitchen

As the March 2025 deadline approaches, Grace Kitchen calls on the Zion community to rally behind its mission. Whether through monetary donations, volunteering, or spreading awareness, every action contributes to the collective effort to combat food insecurity.

Donations can be made through the Waygiver platform at <https://waygiver.com/campaigns/3101>, the QR code that is provided, and by contacting Grace Church’s administrative office at (919) 834-9286. For updates and additional ways to get involved, visit the Grace Church Facebook page.



Grace Kitchen’s campaign is more than a fundraising initiative—it’s a testament to the power of unity and compassion. In a world often divided by differences, this small yet mighty kitchen reminds us of the profound impact of coming together for a shared purpose. Together, we can ensure that no one in College Park goes hungry and that every individual has the chance to thrive.

One of A.M.E. Zion’s Own Brings Talents Back Home

By Christopher Williams

From a young child under the pastoral care of then Rev. Dr. Dennis V. Proctor (now Bishop Proctor) to an adult, Christopher Williams has lived his life by the words of wisdom imparted to him all those years ago. Bishop Proctor would often gather the children of St. Luke A.M.E. Zion Church around the altar to reward them for good report card grades. After each reward had been given out, he would always tell the children, “If better is possible, then good is not enough”.

Blessed with the opportunity to work in ministry with churches from various denominations, Christopher was able to gain insight into just how much access to technology and resources others really have. Having gone out into the world, he had indeed seen that better was now possible, so the good that he had been birthed out of was no longer enough. Using his knowledge of information technology via his degree in Computer



Science, Christopher has created his own company focused on bringing access to technology to those who may not otherwise be able to take advantage of it.

Christopher is currently on a mission to bring this technology back to his home church of A.M.E. Zion by both partnering with and offering his services to the denomination as a whole. Through his company, he hopes to allow every church to have access to a new website with included maintenance, social media management, remote IT support, and e-blast email mass communication. With multiple tiers of affordable pricing and value at each level, Christopher is hoping to bridge the gap between the legacy of the past and the bright potential of the future!

If your church is interested in what his company has to offer, please visit his website at chatham-creativemedia.com where you can learn about the different packaged offerings as well as schedule a free consultation.

The Sacred Table: Why Communion is Special to Methodists and Unique in The A.M.E. Zion Context

By Kelcy G.L. Steele, M.DIV., PH.D.

In The A.M.E. Zion Church, Communion is viewed as a vital means of grace, offering believers a tangible connection to Christ's redemptive sacrifice. I always emphasize that participating in Communion is not merely a ritualistic act but a profound spiritual experience that reinforces the unity and equality of all congregants before God. This perspective aligns with the church's historical commitment to liberation and social justice, where the Lord's Table symbolizes a space where all distinctions are dissolved in the unity of Christ's body.



In African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E. Zion) churches and other Methodist traditions, covering the altar, Communion elements, and sometimes the pastor in white during Communion holds deep theological and symbolic significance.

1. **Symbol of Purity and Holiness:** White, traditionally associated with purity and holiness in Scripture, symbolizes the holiness of the Communion sacrament. It reminds the congregation of Christ's purity and sinlessness, emphasizing the Methodist call to holiness.
2. **Representation of Christ's Righteousness:** White garments symbolize the imputed righteousness of believers, covering them with Christ's purity and making them worthy to approach the Lord's Table. It also visually represents the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives.
3. **Celebration of the Resurrection:** The practice of white coverings during Communion connects the sacred act to the resurrection, symbolizing the victory of Christ over sin and death.

- **Easter Symbolism:** White, the liturgical color for Easter, symbolizes Christ's victory over death and resurrection. It emphasizes believers' resurrection hope during Communion, a proclamation of Christ's death and resurrection.

- **Humility and Servanthood:** Covering Communion elements in white linen symbolizes humility and reverence, akin to Christ's crucifixion. Pastors' white robes signify their role as servants, emphasizing the sacrament and Christ.

- **Unity and Equality in Christ:** The A.M.E. Zion Church's open table policy and uniform white Communion garments symbolize unity and equality among believers, emphasizing their equality at the foot of the cross.

- **Communal Identity:** White garments create visual unity among clergy and laity, symbolizing their shared membership in the body of Christ and holy lives.

Covering the altar, Communion elements, and the pastor in white during A.M.E. Zion Church Communion services signifies purity, holiness, resurrection hope, humility, and believer unity in Christ. This tradition connects the congregation to Christian worship history and visually proclaims the gospel: Christ's sacrifice cleanses believers and invites them to the table of grace.

Communion, also known as the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist, holds a profound place in Christian worship, symbolizing Christ's sacrifice and the unity of believers. For Methodists, however, this sacrament carries unique theological and spiritual significance that sets it apart from other Christian denominations. In the African American Methodist tradition, shaped by a history of struggle, liberation, and resilience, Communion takes on an even deeper meaning—representing not only spiritual nourishment but also a powerful symbol of justice, community, and divine grace.



John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, viewed Communion as a "means of grace"—a channel through which God's grace is both received and experienced. Unlike some denominations that see the Eucharist purely as a memorial or a symbolic act, Methodists embrace a more profound spiritual presence of Christ in the sacrament. Wesley encouraged frequent Communion, believing it to be a vital practice for spiritual growth and an assurance of God's love.

This sacramental theology sets Methodists apart from other Protestant traditions that may limit or simplify the understanding of the Eucharist. For Methodists, the bread and wine serve as conduits for encountering Christ's real, transformative presence—an encounter that empowers believers to live out their faith actively and justly in the world.

One of the most distinctive aspects of Methodist Communion is the practice of an "open table," where all who seek Christ are welcome, regardless of church membership, denominational background, or spiritual status. This radical hospitality reflects the inclusive love of Jesus, who broke bread with sinners, outcasts, and the marginalized.



In contrast, many denominations restrict Communion to baptized members or those who adhere strictly to specific doctrines. Methodism's open table practice is a profound theological statement: the grace of God is available to all, without prerequisites or barriers.



For African American Methodists, Communion is not only a spiritual encounter but also a historical and communal act of resistance and liberation. During slavery, segregated Communion services were often a bitter reality. Black Methodists, particularly in the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) and African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E.Z.) churches, transformed the sacrament into a powerful symbol of equality.

ty and divine justice.

In these congregations, the Lord's Table became a space where earthly distinctions—slave and free, black and white—were dissolved in the unity of Christ's body. The act of sharing bread and wine was a foretaste of the divine justice to come, a vision of a reconciled and equal humanity under God. Even today, African American Methodist churches emphasize the inclusive nature of Communion, affirming the dignity of all believers and rejecting any form of exclusion.

Communion's connection to justice is deeply woven into the fabric of African American Methodist theology. The prayer of confession and assurance of pardon spoken during the service emphasizes repentance not just of personal sins but also of systemic injustices. As the congregation partakes in the sacrament, they commit themselves to the work of justice, echoing the prophetic call to "let justice roll down like waters" (Amos 5:24).

Moreover, Communion in this context is a reminder of the embodied faith of Jesus, who fed the hungry and healed the oppressed. It calls believers to a faith that is active, communal, and engaged in the world—a faith that fights against racism, inequality, and injustice.

In African American Methodist churches, Communion also serves a vital role in community healing. The act of gathering around the table fosters a profound sense of belonging, unity, and spiritual restoration. In communities burdened by historical trauma, violence, and socio-economic struggles, the Lord's Table becomes a place where grief is acknowledged, hope is rekindled, and the promise of God's kingdom is reaffirmed.



This communal aspect of Communion reinforces the African concept of Ubuntu—"I am because we are." It embodies the belief that one's humanity is intertwined with others, making the act of Communion not only a personal encounter with Christ but also a collective affirmation of solidarity and resilience.

For Methodists, and particularly for African American Methodists, Communion is more than a ritual; it is a profound expression of God's unconditional grace, a call to justice, and a reminder of the beloved community that transcends all earthly divisions. Its unique theology of an open table and its deep roots in the struggle for justice and equality make the sacrament a powerful witness to the transformative love of Christ.

As believers break bread and share the cup, they not only remember Christ's sacrifice but also commit to living out His radical love in a broken world.

In this way, the Methodist understanding of Communion continues to inspire faith, justice, and hope—pointing to a future where all are truly welcome at God's table.



"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's Grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10

✓ VOTE

RACHEL D. HIGHSMITH

Candidate for 2nd Vice President
Connectional Lay Council

CAMPAIGN PLATFORM

- Boost online database usage for membership
- Continue enhancing and achieving higher membership goals
- Enhance benefits for membership cardholders
- Streamline membership updates and card distribution

LET'S GO HIGHER WITH HIGHSMITH!

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13TH QUADRENNIAL CONVENTION
JULY 26-31, 2025

BENTON CONVENTION CENTER
WINSTON-SALEM, NC

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RACHEL D. HIGHSMITH

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

Hickory Grove A.M.E. Zion Church:
Lay Council President 2015- present
Administrative Assistant 2015- present
Steward Board member 2015- present
Home Mission Representative 2012- present

Winston-Salem District:
1st VP Lay Council 2022- present
2nd VP Lay Council 2019-2022
Co-Director of YACM 2022- present
Director of YACM 2015-2021
President of Conference Workers 2012-2014

Western NC Conference:
1st VP Lay Council 2021- present
Health Ministry Committee Member 2023- present
Young Adult Initiative Chair 2013-2021

Connectional:
50th, 51st, 52nd General Conference Delegate
Church Growth and Development Administrative Board July 2024-present

Black History Month at the Met

By Georgette Williams

Photos By Micah Clay and Richie Williams

St. Louis, MO., Black History Month at Washington Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church in St. Louis, MO., was filled with activities sponsored by the leaders in the Christian Education Department: Mrs. Ruby Rideout, Mrs. Loretha Young, Mrs. Sanddra Davie, Mrs. Evelyn Gilliam, Mrs. Wanda Green, Ms. Krista Holmes, Rev. Niesha Thomas-Walker and Rev. Dr. William L. Johnson, III, pastor.



The theme for the month was “Ubuntu,” meaning, I am because we



are. The focus was being a community and honoring our community. Originating in the Bantu and Xhosa people of Southern Africa and popularized by Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela, the Ubuntu philosophy embodies a communal ethos that emphasizes shared responsibility, trust in each other, and interconnectedness among the community. Each Sunday, there was a recommended color and a Black History presenter. Members were encouraged to donate a book written by a Black author. The intent is to build a library for future use.

Sunday, February 2, 2025 – The color was green, representing the

“Mother Land.” Mrs. Sandra Davie brought a presentation on The A.M.E. Zion logo.

Sunday, February 9, 2025 – The color was red, representing the blood shed by our people. Miss Journey Thomas-Tyson presented a brief biography of Bessie Smith, an African American blues singer.



Sunday, February 16, 2025 – The color was black, representing the strength of our community. Mr. Langston Gilliam presented information on the Harlem Renaissance, which he affectionately labeled “stuff.”

Sunday, February 23, 2025, focused on Greek paraphernalia, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) gear, or any combination of black, red, or green. Ms. Darlene Smith presented the legacy of the Edwards (Wallace) family of Washington Metropolitan, who have been members for several generations.

The events culminated with a potluck dinner and the “Black History Museum” on the lower level of the church. The museum consisted of displays of notable people and moments in our history. They included James Weldon Johnson, Malcolm X, Angela Davis, Harriet Tubman, The Divine Nine, Zion’s Colleges and Universities, Patrick Mahomes, Langston Hughes, Colin Kaepernick, Rosa Parks, The Great Migration, and others.

It was a well-organized month filled with information on our heritage. After the delicious meal, we participated in demonstrations of popular African American dances.



Blue Ridge Holds Easter Check-Up

By Ms. Ruth L. Thompson

The Third Check Up Meeting (Easter) was held on March 1, 2025, at the New Bethel A.M.E. Zion Church in Forest City, North Carolina. Senior Bishop Darryl B. Starnes presided. The Missionary Supervisor was Sister Camille C. Starnes. Presiding Elders were Drs. J. Ruth Shields and Herbert Grant. The host pastor was Reverend Keith L. Lipsey. The theme for 2024-2025 was “Committed to Our Mission” The A.M.E. Zion Church-Serving this present Age.”

The meeting opened with intercessory prayers led by Rev. Keith Lipsey and the prayer coordinators. The teaching session followed.

Bishop Starnes delivered a powerful message on “Shepherding the Flock of God” (John 21:5-17); the Bishop said, “John’s Gospel records three of Jesus’ post presentations to His disciples. We prove our love for Him by shepherding the flock”. He gave three insights:

1. Shepherding the flock of God entails feeding His lambs. Feeding His lambs means nurturing the children, youth, and young adults. Making sure the church is a welcoming place for them and reaching out to them for age-appropriate ministry. Give them class leaders who care for them. It means nurturing those who are seeking salvation and



those who are newly saved, caring for them, and giving them intensive pastoral care. Feed them sincere milk of the word. Nurture the little ones, young and vulnerable; never mislead or corrupt them, safeguard them, and never abuse or mistreat them. Never despise or look down on them.

2. Shepherding means loving them by nurturing them more than money and material things and never exploiting them more than buildings and property, loving them more than power, position, and prestige. Tending them by watching over them, caring for their souls-never abandoning or deserting them. 3. It entails feeding His sheep by preaching God’s word to them, which has the power to save our souls. God’s word, not our own ideas or world philosophies, and not pagan

beliefs. Teaching God’s word-not our own opinions, not the wisdom of the world. It means teaching them through Christian Education to trust Christ, obey Christ, and serve Christ. The mission of The A.M.E. Zion Church is to serve the present age by sharing the Gospel of Christ”.

The meeting closed with reports from the Conference Studies and Finance Committee. The next meeting will be the Annual Conference, May 21-23, 2025, which will also be held at the New Bethel Church in Forest City.

SALUTING ZION WOMEN MAKING HISTORY

Mallory P. Wright Gayle, Advocate For Children By The Star of Zion

Dr. Mallory Wright-Gayle is “first and foremost, an advocate for children” and is the 9th-grade Assistant Principal at Western High School in Baltimore, MD. Western High was founded in 1844 and is the nation’s oldest all-girls public high school.

On February 26, 2025, Dr. Mallory Wright-Gayle invited friends and family to join her on Zoom as she successfully defended her dissertation on the Urban Educational Leadership Ed.D. Program at Morgan State University, titled “Between Foresight and Hindsight: Black Women Principals’ Complicity in Urban Disproportionate Discipline.”

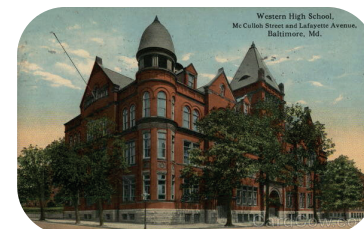
Dr. Wright-Gayle says, “Any opportunity to work with children to improve their lives in some way is something that I look forward to. I have a particular interest in equity urban education. As an educator, I believe that all students have the right to have a quality education with a collaborative effort from their teacher, staff, school, and home.”

Dr. Wright-Gayle is married to Kharey Gayle and is a 3rd Generation Zionite. Her mother is Melva Polk Wright, who has served the Mis-

sionary Society on every level, and is the current Connectional Secretary, Youth Missionaries.

Dr. Wright-Gayle has served as Christian Education Department Corresponding Secretary, VCYC Cabinet from 2010-2014. She is a member and former Trustee of the Pennsylvania Avenue A.M.E. Zion Church in Baltimore, MD., where Rev. Milton Alexander Williams, Jr., is Senior Pastor. The Penn Ave. A.M.E. Zion’s Facebook page states: “We see ourselves as a different kind of A.M.E. Zion Church; where tradition meets innovation, and custom intersects with the cutting edge to claim the lost and reclaim the disillusioned. We are here to spark a movement that brings people to a new place of Christian freedom! We want to take you to a place where it’s not about rules but about relationships. We want to move the body of Christ to understand that it’s not about going to church but about being the church. Pennsylvania Avenue will help you discover how the faith that forged the paths of our fore-parents can shape the journey of a new generation and become the driving force in your life.”

CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. MALLORY WRIGHT GAYLE!



WOMEN’S HISTORY IN THE MAKING: Renee Felton Pullen

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Star of Zion Spotlight Editor

March is Women’s Month History Month, and the Women of Zion can proudly claim ownership and deserve recognition. Renee Felton Pullen, a member of John A.M.E. Zion Church in Washington, DC., is one such woman. On February 24, 2025, the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated, Eastern Region, extended “Congratulations to Soror Renee Pullen,” who was elected the 14th District of Columbia State Director of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated.

Renee was initiated into the Sorority at the Lambda Epsilon Chapter, Illinois, Chicago (Great Lakes Region), and served as Business Manager as an undergraduate member. She has been a Centennial Life Member of the Omicron Phi Zeta (OPhiZ) Chapter in Washington, DC, since 1996. She has served on various committees and has been involved in many programs. She has also been elected/appointed to several Chapter positions.

Over the years, Renee has been the recipient of numerous Zeta Awards. In 2015, she was Zeta of the Year. In 2017, she received the “She’s So Electrifying” Stellar Performer Award. She also received the Outstanding Eastern Region President Award in March 2017. She has several Zeta certificates.

“Beyond the Walls of Zeta,” Renee retired as the Management Analyst in the Exploration Systems Development and Space Operations – National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

She has been a member of John Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church in Wash-

ington, D.C., for over 30 years, where Rev. Dr. Christopher L. Zacharias is Pastor. John Wesley A.M.E.Z’s mission is “To be a church of Purposeful Ministry, Passionate Worship, Persistent Faith and Powerful Witnesses of God’s Saving Grace.

Renee is the Past 2nd Vice President of the International Women’s Home & Overseas Missionary Society of the A.M.E. Zion Church and served as Financial Secretary of the Philadelphia-Baltimore Annual Conference. She is a life member of the National Council of Negro Women, Church Women United, and the Order of the Eastern Star, Prince Hall Affiliation, Washington, DC.

Sorority History - Zeta Phi
Beta Sorority, Incorporated was founded January 16, 1920, at Howard University, Washington, D.C. The Klan was very active during this period and the Harlem Renaissance was acknowledged as the first important movement of Black artists and writers in the U.S. Since its inception, Zeta has continued its steady climb into the national spotlight with programs designed to demonstrate concern for the human condition both nationally and internationally. Zeta chapters and auxiliaries have given hours of voluntary service to educate the public, assist youth, provide scholarships, support organized charities, and promote legislation for social and civic change. Zeta Phi Beta has chartered hundreds of chapters worldwide and has a membership of 100,000+.

Kudos to Renee – A Woman of Zion Making History!



Young Missionary on the Move Taking Equity & Justice to the Next Level

By Tiffany Wilson

The Wadesboro-Monroe District under the leadership of Presiding Elder Laticia Hill Godette and District Missionary President Shretta Taylor held the 3rd Missionary Mass Meeting at Pleasant Hill A.M.E. Zion church in Wadesboro, NC. The Youth and Buds missionary departments led by Y Secretary Sis. Tiffany Wilson and Bud Superintendent Sis. L. Jac Smith took over the mass meeting with a focus on Equity and Justice.

The Mass meeting provided something for everyone. The Buds and Youth took over the worship service in their own unique way. The District Youth Choir, under the direction of Rev. Demetra Marsh, provided the musical selections for the service, and with February being Black History Month, there was a reenactment portrayal of Harriett Tubman. Youth Danielle Marsh and Bud Jariah Caldwell interviewed Councilwoman Surluta Anthony, the first Black female City Council member in Monroe, NC.

We had Ms. Alyssa Floyd and Ms. Adina Godette speak on social issues that affect the youth, as well as held separate sessions with the Parent Body and YAMS. We had Youth Eden Covington present an



original jazz dance to the song Freedom. In a video presentation, some of the youth quoted famous black leaders on equity and justice and spoke on how it applies to them today.

The Sacred Health Ministry Coordinator, Dr. Mary Barber, presented on heart disease awareness to the Parent Body and YAMS. To wrap things up, The Buds completed a service project for the local homeless community shelter.

The Sacred Health Ministry Coordinator, Dr. Mary Barber, presented on heart disease awareness to the Parent Body and YAMS. To wrap things up, The Buds completed a service project for the local homeless community shelter.

RESURRECTION SUNDAY- HOPE & RENEWAL

By Debra Chappelle-Polk, Star of Zion Spotlight Editor

April 2025..., *"I haven't seen you in a month of Sundays."* How often have we said or heard that, especially on Easter Sunday when Church attendance is generally up? Easter is the Sunday when people show up at church wearing their Sunday best, catch up with those they haven't seen "in a month of Sundays," and promise (again) to "do lunch." Easter, like Christmas, has become commercialized, and the true meaning of holidays has been lost.

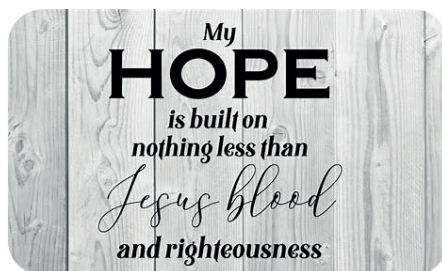
Resurrection Sunday is the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Messiah, who would die for our sins and rise on the third day. It was the beginning of hope for all, and that hope continues today.

Resurrection Sunday is a poignant reminder of hope and renewal; it's a celebration of rebirth, transformation, undying hope, and a promise of brighter days ahead.

The word hope is used to express a variety of sentiments. Some are "hopeful," i.e., we live in hope; pin your hopes on someone/something, a glimmer of hope. Some are not, i.e., dash someone's hopes, beyond hope, give up hope. Same words, different interpretations.

The Oxford Language Dictionary defines hope as a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen; something good that you want to happen in the future; a confident feeling about what will happen in the future.

The Holman Bible Dictionary defines Biblical hope as the anticipation



of a favorable outcome under God's guidance. More specifically, hope is the confidence that what God has done for us in the past guarantees our participation in what God will do in the future.

In "Understanding the Biblical Definition of Hope - Scriptural Thinking," hope is defined as:

- Being sure of God's promises, even if we can't see them at present.
- Having confident expectations of what God has promised.
- Being grounded on God's promises, not human power.
- An anchor for the soul.

Resurrection Sunday often falls in April, as it does this year. April's significance in the Bible encourages believers to reflect on their own lives, seek new beginnings, and embrace the redemption offered through Jesus Christ. April reminds us of God's power and grace and symbolizes the victory of light over darkness and the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand.

What are your hopes for the future built on?

Reference Sources: Understanding the Biblical Definition of Hope - Scriptural Thinking

Excerpted lyrics written in 1834 by Edward Mote and printed in The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Bicentennial Hymnal on page 286.



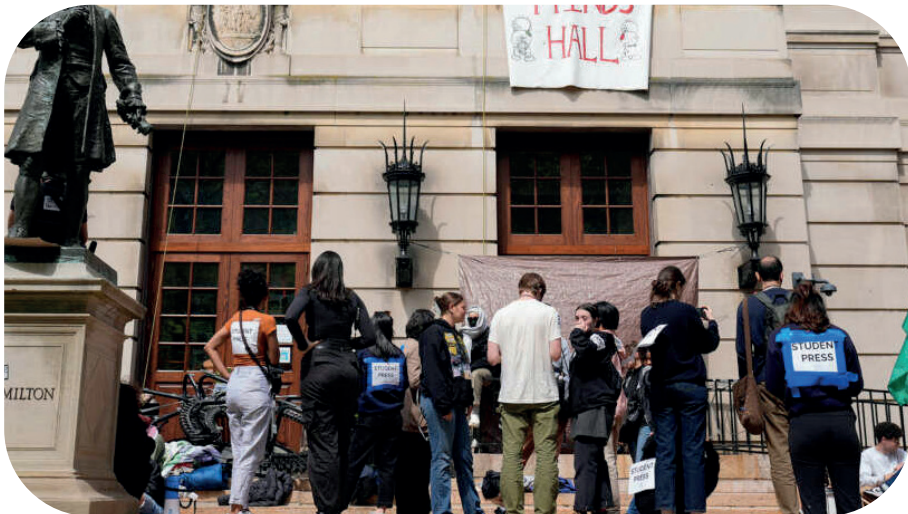
Rev. Roderick J. Josey
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Columbia University Faces Federal Funding Cuts and Student Expulsions Amid Campus Protests

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor

Columbia University is facing mounting challenges after the Trump administration revoked approximately \$400 million in federal grants and contracts. The decision, announced by a federal task force, stems from allegations that the university failed to address harassment of Jewish students amid ongoing campus protests over the Israel-Gaza conflict.

On March 7, 2025, a coalition of federal agencies—including the Department of Justice, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education, and the U.S. General Services Administration—announced the cancellation of Columbia’s federal funding. Officials cited the university’s “continued inaction in the face of persistent harassment of Jewish students” as the primary reason for



the move.

The revoked funding included grants supporting medical research, education programs, and scientific innovation. Federal officials have warned that additional cancellations could follow if the university does not take action to address the concerns raised by the administration.

In response to escalating tensions, Columbia University has taken disciplinary action against students involved in pro-Palestinian demonstrations. University officials confirmed that several students who occupied a campus building during protests last spring have been expelled or



suspended. Additionally, some graduates who participated in these demonstrations have had their diplomas temporarily revoked.

Student activists have condemned the expulsions, calling them an attack on free speech, while university administrators argue that the measures were necessary to maintain campus order and safety.

Columbia’s response to both the protests and the federal government’s actions has sparked broader debates about free speech, academic freedom, and the role of universities in political discourse. University officials worry that complying with federal demands could compromise institutional autonomy. Meanwhile, some faculty members and student groups argue that the administration’s actions set a dangerous precedent for silencing dissent.

Negotiations between Columbia University and federal regulators are ongoing, with reports suggesting that the university’s Board of Trustees is divided on how to proceed.

The situation at Columbia highlights a larger national discussion about balancing the need to address hate speech with protecting freedom of expression on college campuses. With the federal government now intervening in higher education funding, universities across the country are closely watching how Columbia navigates these challenges.

As this story unfolds, it remains to be seen whether Columbia will adjust its policies in response to federal pressure or stand firm in defense of its academic principles. Whatever the outcome, the case is likely to set a precedent for how universities handle similar issues in the future.



HBCUs can have Superheroes, too! Black superhero comic-turned-animated-film creator at Livingstone on March 14

By Garette Hunter, Livingstone College
Photo By @hbcubuzz.com

Salisbury, NC | Livingstone College's Andrew Carnegie Library will host a book signing and movie preview for Maurice "Raheem" Mander's Black superhero comic-turned-animated film "Surian Seed: HBCU Heroes." The free public event will be held at 1 p.m. Friday, March 14, at Livingstone's George F. Shipman Science Center.

From the worldwide success of Marvel's "Black Panther," starring the late Howard University alumnus Chadwick Boseman, to the upcoming release of "Captain America: Brave New World" starring Anthony Mackie as Captain America, the pantheon of Black superheroes leading major and minor motion pictures continues to expand, and will now include Mander's collection of Black defenders.



Set in Mander's hometown of Trenton, NJ, the story follows a group of superhuman residents who are graduates of Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The story highlights the Black experience in Trenton, making the characters relatable and authentic representations of everyday members of the Black community. Prior to working on the first issue of the original comic, Mander, an alumnus of Morehouse College and Morgan State University (HBCUs), created and self-published an encyclopedia outlining the universe of "Surian Seed" with all of its characters. The encyclopedia became the inspiration for the comic and, now, the animated film.

For additional information, contact the Andrew Carnegie Library staff at (704) 216-6033. For media/interview inquiries, contact Mai Li Muñoz, Chief Communications Officer, at 704-216-6067.

Photo credit @hbcubuzz.com

Livingstone College Competes in 36th HCASC National Qualifier

By Star of Zion News

Livingstone College competed in the National Qualifying Tournament of the 36th Honda Campus All-Star Challenge (HCASC), America's premier academic competition for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) students, on February 22 at North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, North Carolina.

In the tournament, teams of four faced off in head-to-head competition and quickly answered questions about history, science, literature, religion, math, the arts, pop culture, and sports against their opponents. Livingstone placed second at the NC A&T State University location, securing the Blue Bears as one of the Thrilling 32 teams competing for institutional grants from Honda and a spot in the HCASC National Championship Tournament taking place on the American Honda corporate campus in Torrance, California April 12-16. The Livingstone College team includes captain and freshman Biology major Carter Thompson of Indianapolis, Indiana; senior business administration major Jacob Adkins of King, North Carolina; senior business administration major Jayden Mungo of Charlotte, North Carolina; and sophomore English education major Kamari Scales of Gibsonville, North Carolina.



The team is coached by Honors Director Dr. Da'Tarvia Parrish.

Team captain Carter Thompson said, "HCASC has been a highlight in my freshman experience as an undergraduate student. I love the challenge. I love the people. I love it all, and I am looking forward to competing in the nationals in April. The reward grants me the opportunity to meet other quiz bowl players and even Honda executives."

HCASC is a year-round program celebrating Black excellence and showcasing the academic talents of top HBCU students from across the country. HCASC challenges students to expand their scope of knowledge on a wide range of topics while also helping to develop their leadership and collaboration skills. With the opportunity to compete against students from other HBCUs, participants network, build camaraderie, and gain mentorship opportunities with HCASC alumni. This year, Honda will provide more than \$400,000 in institutional grants to the participating HBCUs, and many of the schools will utilize the grants to fund student scholarships. More than 170,000 scholars have competed in HCASC since the academic tournament was established in 1989.

For more information, visit www.hcasc.com.



“Adjusting My Crown”: Cassandra Thompson & Wendee Maire Bailey to Co-Headline Livingstone’s March 24 WHM Event

By Garette Hunter, Livingstone College

Salisbury, NC | In honor of Women’s History Month, Livingstone College’s Mental Health Task Force will host “Adjusting My Crown: Stories of Strength, Success & Sisterhood - A Women’s Empowerment Event” at 11 a.m. Monday, March 24, in Varick Auditorium on the college’s campus. It is free and open to the public.



Bailey is an entrepreneur and the founder of Wendee Bailey Investments (WBIC). She is an expert strategist specializing in mergers and acquisitions and revitalizing struggling companies. Through her company, WBIC, Bailey provides strategic mentorship and investment advice to economically empower minority-operated businesses. She also advocates for providing supportive housing for adolescents who have aged out of foster care and incarcerated individuals after release. Bailey serves as a trustee on the Livingstone College Board.

Speaking at the event will be Livingstone College Board of Trustee member Wendee Bailey and Cassandra Thompson, National Basketball Association.

“Both Wendee and Cassandra are excellent examples of women succeeding in business,” said Dr. Jacqueline Davis, Livingstone College First Lady and Wellness and Well-being Coordinator for the Mental Health Task Force. “Their stories of success will hopefully inspire, motivate, and encourage our students and community members during the event.”

Thompson serves as the director of Events and Logistics for the Referee Operations Department, where she produces all referee-related content for the NBA across various platforms. She also manages key initiatives, such as “Her Time to Play” and the NBA HBCU Initiative. Thompson is also committed to mentoring young people by providing guidance on career development and goal attainment.

For more information, interviews, or media coverage opportunities, contact Mai Li Muñoz at mmunoz@livingstone.edu.

Clinton College Participates in HBCU Day at the South Carolina State House

By Rev. Roderick J. Josey, Education Editor
Photos By Clinton College

On February 18th, Clinton College students took part in HBCU Day at the South Carolina State House, an event dedicated to celebrating the rich history and contributions of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This occasion provided student leaders with the opportunity to engage with policymakers, advocate for the future of HBCUs, and gain firsthand experience in the workings of state government.

During the visit, students met with local legislators and had the opportunity to interact with Governor Henry McMaster. These engagements offered valuable insights into the state’s commitment to higher education and the role of HBCUs in shaping South Carolina’s future. Among the discussions, Clinton College student Benz Joseph posed a significant question: “With federal policies shifting, how can



the state ensure continued support for minority-serving institutions like Clinton College and others?”

While the question remained unanswered, it initiated an important dialogue on the sustainability and growth of HBCUs in a changing policy landscape.

The event also highlighted the steadfast advocacy of House Representative John King, a committed supporter of HBCUs. His continuous efforts to champion the mission and needs of these institutions serve as a reminder of the importance of legislative allies in the fight for educational equity.

Clinton College remains dedicated to empowering the next generation of leaders. Events such as HBCU Day emphasize the strength and influence of the HBCU community, reinforcing the significance of advocacy and engagement. As discussions surrounding HBCU support continue, Clinton College remains committed to advancing meaningful conversations and inspiring future change-makers.



The path toward sustained support for HBCUs is ongoing—but with engaged students, dedicated advocates, and a commitment to progress, the conversation will continue.



STAY LIT!

Miss Samia Richardson, President
Simon Temple AME Zion Church
Fayetteville, NC

Rev. Dr. R.J. Chandler Sr.,
International Director of Acolytes

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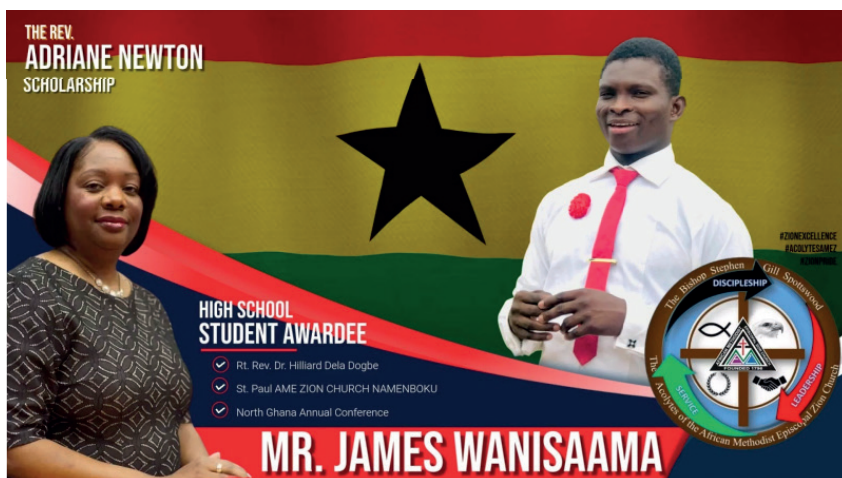


@acolytesamez or
acolytesamez@gmail.com

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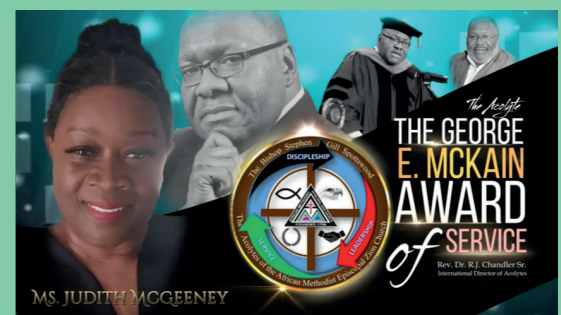


ACOLYTES AWARD \$2000.00 IN SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS



The Bishop Stephen Gill Spottswood Acolytes of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Inc. awarded two scholarships at the Christian Education Winter Meeting on December 29, 2024. The Rev. Adrienne Newton Scholarship (High School Student Awardee) was awarded to Mr. James Wanisaama who is a member of the St. Paul AME Zion Church, North Ghana Annual Conference. The Rev. Dr. Kathryn G. Brown Scholarship (College Awardee) was awarded to Ms. Monica Dudukitka Sambian, who is a member of St. John AME Zion Church, Nakpanduri District of the North Ghana Annual Conference. where the Rt. Rev. Hilliard Dogbe is the Presiding Prelate.

Proudly, Dr. Pamela Sharpe, a member of the 5th Avenue AME Zion Church where her pastor is the Rev. Victor Patterson, Rev. Alphonso Meadows, Presiding Elder and the Rt. Rev. George D. Crenshaw is the Presiding Prelate of the North Eastern Episcopal



District was awarded the Dr. Brenda G. Smith Award of Excellence. Mrs. Judith McGeeney, a member of the Pennsylvania Ave AME Zion Church where her pastor is the Rev. Milton A. Williams, Rev. Dr. Evalina Huggins, Presiding Elder, and the Rt. Rev. Brian R. Thompson is the Presiding Prelate of the Mid-Atlantic



Episcopal District was awarded the Rev. Dr. George McKain Award of Service at the CED Winter Meeting.



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Social Justice Editor
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There Is No Such Word as Can't: The Reverend Richard A. G. Foster's Unheralded Sojourn in New Haven

By Dr. Benjamin Foster, Jr.
Photo By Dr. Benjamin Foster, Jr.

In 1940, African Americans comprised a growing segment of New Haven's populace, owing to the WWI, first Great Migration from the South, the Great Depression. Aided by the recruitment initiatives of Arms and other manufacturers' need for workers AND WWII, the African American population increased significantly.

To address the spiritual needs of these migrants, Bishop William J. Walls of The African American Methodist Episcopal Zion Church denomination, which was formed in 1822, transferred the Reverend Richard A. G. Foster (affectionately known as RAG) to Varick Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church, with the command: "bring them a bucket full of goodness and mercy."

Varick Memorial A.M.E. Zion, located on Dixwell Avenue, is the second church established within the denomination, who count among its membership icons Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and W.E.B. DuBois' maternal family.

Bishop Walls' decision was based upon RAG's abilities to work with white ministers in the segregated South, his articulation of the plight of manual laborers, and his itinerant ministry experience. While attending Syracuse University, RAG served as Pastored in Attleboro, Massachusetts, Ansonia, Connecticut, and Syracuse, New York.

Reverend Foster came to New Haven from the St. John A.M.E. Zion Church in Wilson, North Carolina. Wilson was in the vicinity where he was raised. The area's primary economy was based on the production of tobacco. Many of the migrants were from the countries with which RAG was very familiar. He would use the skills gained as a scholar-athlete at Livingstone College and Hood Theological Seminary in Salisbury, North Carolina, to guide his flock and assist them in navigating the rural-to-urban transition. Handsome, affable with a winning smile, and fiercely believing in the equality of humankind, RAG took the pulpit of Varick in 1940 with a membership of thirty-five active members.

Surveying the church and the African American population's status in New Haven, the young minister regularly recited the mantra he had been taught in segregated elementary school: "There is no such word as can't, you try, and try again." When RAG was appointed to Varick Memorial, family, friends, and his Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity brothers were relieved. While immensely proud, they feared his stridency on racial issues would lead to injury or death, which was not an uncommon fate for outspoken African American leaders in the South at the time.

Buoyed by the confidence placed in him by the highly esteemed Bishop Walls, he set about growing his church and ministering to the residents in neighborhoods in close proximity and beyond. RAG knew that many of the families were from the Carolinas. Moreover, some of the men in his family and communities that he had pastored had harvested tobacco in Connecticut, during the summers. Others had settled in the Nutmeg state. During his undergraduate years, classmates worked Connecticut's tobacco fields. They told stories of less racial discrimination and higher wages.

RAG, being the son of a preacher, fully comprehended that text without context is a pretext. Consequently, he immersed himself in the social and political life of New Haven as a means to understand New Haven's social structure and advance the cause of his people. He marveled at the fact that New Haven was the birthplace of the **Abolitionist Movement** as it was the venue for the **Amistad Trial** in 1839, the birthplace of Edward Bouchet, America's **first** African American to earn a Ph.D. degree in 1876. A "quick study," RAG became New Haven's second African American elected to the Board of Alders. A Republican, he served three terms representing the 19th ward, the area in which Varick is located.

Using his considerable influence as an Alderman, a growing church,



and frequent interaction with politicians such as Mayor William C. Celentano, Clarence F. Baldwin, Chairman, State Republicans, Congressman James G. Patterson, Congressman John Davis Lodge and William L. Hadden, Attorney General, RAG assisted domestic workers to obtain better pay for their employment as chauffeurs, cooks, butlers, and maids. Moreover, he secured more than 2700 jobs for African Americans in the city in many factories and plants that had not previously hired them. Serving seven years as an Alderman, he was responsible for the city, hiring the first African American court clerks and several jobs in the police department.

RAG was often referred to as a one-man Fair Employment Practice Committee (F.E.P.C.).

During this period, Rev. Foster's salary was \$35 dollars a week. He and his wife, Thelma Brooks Foster, raised five daughters. His daughters, Reverend Lillian Foster-Hilliard, Marianne Foster-Hilliard, and Ellen Randall, now long-time California residents, were born in New Haven. Retired professional women, they recall their home, which was also the church parsonage frequented by Bishop William J. Walls, Paul Robeson, Reverend Fulton J. Sheen, Governor John D. Lodge and wife, Francesca, A. Phillip Randolph, Yale University Professors Andrew Morehouse and Noni Gopal Dev Joardar, Dr. William Trent, President Livingstone College, Jersey Joe Walcott and various Ministers of all denominations, Priests and Rabbis from throughout the city.

With seemingly boundless energy, according to the **Negro Digest**, Reverend Foster found time to serve as Secretary of the National Council of The A.M.E. Zion Church, Secretary-Treasurer of the Ministers' Association of Greater New Haven; he was the only African American minister in the association, an officer in the local N.A.A.C.P. and Rent Control Commission. RAG, despite his ministerial and civic responsibilities, mentored Levi Jackson, star running back and first African American Captain of Yale's football team, and actively participated in his beloved fraternity. He developed outreach programs for servicemen and veterans and corresponded with scholar-activist Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, a founder of the N.A.A.C.P.

The Reverend Richard A. G. Foster accomplished much in New Haven but counted the birth and care of his five daughters as his greatest achievement. A devoted family man, RAG relocated his brothers Edward and Carruthers to New Haven. They were veterans who were "shell-shocked" or had "post-traumatic stress syndrome." He dedicated himself to their care.

After twelve years of dynamic and meaningful accomplishments in New Haven, Reverend Foster was appointed to greater Cooper A.M.E. Zion Church in Oakland, California, where he successfully pastored for thirteen years. Needless to say, he continued a path-breaking sojourn in California. He gave the invocation at the 1954 Republican Convention in San Francisco.

Much has occurred in New Haven since RAG Foster's time, but the contributions of this largely forgotten African American minister, politician, and humanist, who believed that: "there was no such word as can't," are still being actualized.

Foster transitioned October 10, 1973, in Oakland, California.

Editor's note: Dr. Benjamin Foster, Jr. and the late Rev Dr. Lamont Freeman Foster, Sr. are Rev. Richard A. G. Foster's cousins. Dr. Foster is an Adjunct Faculty in African American Studies and Religion at Central Connecticut State University and Convener, Institute for Cross-Cultural Awareness and Transformative Education. He facilitated the movement leading to the passage of CT Public Law 19-12 in 2019 in which African American Studies courses must be offered in Connecticut's High Schools. The Rev. Dr. Lamont Freeman Foster, Sr. served as President, National Alumni Association Hood Theological Seminary and Senior Pastor, Saint John A.M.E. Zion Church in Wilson, NC.

Black HERstory, STAMPED: A Celebration of African American Women on U.S. Postage Stamps

By Star of Zion News

Collecting stamps is a way to explore the various cultures of a nation and the world. It is an opportunity to explore art and learn history. This resource will provide you with an opportunity to learn about some of the history and heritage of African Americans and be empowered to pass it on.

The collecting and study of stamps is called philately. A stamp collector is called a philatelist.

The first postage stamp was issued in 1840 in Great Britain and the first United States Postage Stamp was issued in 1847. Ninety-three years later (1940), Booker T. Washington became the first African American to be honored by the U. S. Postal Service.

African Americans have been honored in various categories and series. The Black Heritage Series began in 1978 with a stamp honoring Harriet Tubman. One stamp is issued in this series each year. (See the listing



below. Note that the numbers in parenthesis (#) indicate the number of stamps issued honoring an African American in a category or series.)

The categories or series are listed alphabetically below:

American Arts Series (2) – Henry O. Tanner 8¢, Paul L. Dunbar 10¢

American Olympians Series (1) – Jesse Owens 25¢

American Photography (1) – James Van Der Zee 37¢

American Bicentennial Series (2) – Salem Poor 6¢, Peter Salem/Trumball 10¢

American Choreographers (1) – Alvin Ailey 37¢

American Sports Personalities (4) – Roberto Clemente 20¢, Joe Louis 29¢, Sugar Ray Robinson 39¢, Arthur Ashe 37¢

American Treasures (16) – “Flowers” by William H. Johnson - Forever, Quilts of Gee’s Bend (10) 39¢, American Dolls (3), “The Prodigal Son” by Aaron Douglas 46¢, “The Westwood Children” by Joshua Johnson 32¢,

Arctic Explorers (1) – Matthew Henson 22¢

Awareness Issues (1) – Sickle Cell

Baseball Sluggers (1) – Roy Campanella 39¢

Basketball (2) – Wilt Chamberlin (Warriors and Lakers) 49¢

The Black Heritage Series

Harriet Tubman - 1978 13¢

Benjamin Banneker – 1980 15¢

Jackie Robinson – 1982 20¢

Carter G. Woodson – 1984 20¢

Sojourner Truth – 1986 22¢

James Weldon Johnson – 1988 22¢

Ida B. Wells – 1990 25¢

E. B. Dubois – 1992 29¢

Allison Davis – 1994 29¢

Ernest E. Just – 1996 32¢

Madam C. J. Walker – 1998 32¢

Patricia Roberts Harris – 2000 32¢

Langston Hughes – 2002 34¢

Paul Robeson – 2004 37¢

Hattie McDaniel – 2006 39¢

Charles Waddell Chesnutt – 2008 41¢

Martin Luther King, Jr. – 1979 15¢

Whitney Moore Young – 1981 15¢

Scott Joplin – 1983 20¢

Mary McLeod Bethune – 1985 22¢

Jean B. Pointe du Sable – 1987 22¢

Asa Philip Randolph – 1989 25¢

Jan E. Matzeliger – 1991 29¢

Percy Lavon Julian – 1993 29¢

Bessie Coleman – 1995 32¢

Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. – 1997 32¢

Malcolm X – 1999 33¢

Roy Wilkins – 2001 34¢

Thurgood Marshall – 2003 37¢

Marian Anderson – 2005 37¢

Ella Fitzgerald – 2007 39¢

Anna Julia Cooper – 2009 44¢

Oscar Micheaux – 2010 44¢

John H. Johnson – 2012 45¢

Shirley Chisholm – 2014 49¢

Richard Allen – 2016 49¢

Lena Horne – 2018 50¢

Gwen Ifill – 2020 55¢

Ernest Gaines – 2022 Forever

Constance Baker Motley – 2024 Forever

Alvin Toussaint – 2025 Forever

Broadway Musical Series (2) – Porgy and Bess 29¢, Showboat 29¢

Celebrate the Century (8)

1900’s W. E. B. DuBois 32¢

1910’s George Washington Carver 32¢, Scouting 32¢

1920’s Flappers/Charleston 32¢, Jazz Flourishes 32¢

1930’s Jesse Owens 32¢, Eleanor Roosevelt with a Black Child 32¢

1940’s Jackie Robinson 33¢

1950’s Desegregating Public Schools 33¢

1960’s Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 33¢, The Peace Corps 33¢1970’s

1980’s Cosby Show 33¢, Hip Hop Culture 33¢

1990’s Cellar Phone 33¢, San Francisco 49ers 33¢

Celebrity Chefs (1) – Edna Lewis 49¢

Civil Rights (4) – Emancipation Proclamation (1963 -5¢, 2013 - 45¢), Rosa Parks 46¢, March on Washington 46¢,

Civil War Series 1861-1865 (2) – Frederick Douglass 35¢, Harriet Tubman 35¢

Civil Rights Pioneers (12) 42¢, - Mary Church Terrell, Mary White Ovington, J. R. Clifford, Joel Elias Spingarn, Oswald Garrison Villard, Daisy Gaston Bates, Charles Hamilton Houston, Walter White, Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, Ruby Hurley

Classic American Dolls (3) – Alabama Baby, Martha Chase, Babyland Ragtime 32¢

Commemorative Issues (7) – W. C. Handy 6¢, George Washington Carver 3¢, Buffalo Soldiers 29¢, Maya Angelo 49¢, Romare Bearden (4 – Conjunction

Barbara Jordan – 2011 44¢

Althea Gibson – 2013 46¢

Robert Robinson Taylor – 2015 49¢

Dorothy Height – 2017 49¢

Gregory Hines – 2019 55¢

August Wilson – 2021 Forever

Edmonia Lewis – 2023 Forever

tion, Odysseus, Prevalence of Ritual, Falling Star 44¢), 13th Amendment 3¢, Mississippi Statehood with hands of Jimmy “Duck” Holmes’ playing the Guitar 50¢, National Museum of African American History and Culture 45¢, Miles Davis??

Distinguished Americans (2) – Wilma Rudolph 23¢, Chief Alfred “Chief” Anderson 70¢ (Tuskegee Airmen)

Distinguished American Diplomats (1) – Clifton R. Wharton, Sr. 39¢

Distinguished Sailors (1) – Doris “Dorie” Miller 44¢

Famous Americans – Booker T. Washington 10¢, John James Audubon 1¢

Folk Heroes (1) – John Henry

Great Americans Series (2) – Charles Drew 35¢, Ralph Bunche 20¢

Innovative Choreographers (1) – Katherine Dunham 45¢

Kwanzaa (13) - 32¢ – 1997, 33¢– 1999 w/ 1997 design, 34¢ – 2001 w/1997 design, 37¢ – 2002 w/1997 design, 37¢ – 2004 w/new design, 39¢ – 2006 w/2004 design, 41¢ – 2007 w/2004 design, 42¢ – 2008 w/2004 design, 44¢ – Forever 2011 w/new design, 46¢ - Forever 2013 w/ new design, 47¢ - Forever 2016 w/ new design, 44¢ – 2009 w/ new design, 50¢ - Forever 2018 w/ new design

Latin Music Legends (1) – Celia Cruz 44¢

Legends of Baseball (4) 33¢– Jackie Robinson, Roberto Clemente, Josh Gibson, Satchel Page

Legends of American Music

Popular Singers 29¢ (2) – Ethel Waters, Nat King Cole

Jazz Singers/Blues Singers 29¢ (8) – Bessie Smith, Muddy Waters, Billie Holiday, Robert Johnson, Jimmy Rushing, Howling Wolf, Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Mildred Bailey

Jazz Musicians 32¢ (10) – Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, James P. Johnson, Ferdinand “Jelly Roll” Morton, Charlie Parker, Eubie Blake, Charles Mingus, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, Erroll Garner

Big Band Leaders (1) - Count Basie 32¢

Gospel Singers 32¢ (4) – Mahalia Jackson, Roberta Martin, Rosetta Thorpe, Clara Ward

Rock and Roll/Rhythm and Blues 29¢ (3) Clyde McPhatter, Otis Redding, Dinah Washington

Folk Musicians 32¢ (3) – Hubie “Leadbelly” Ledbetter, Sonny Terry, Josh White

Legends of the West Series 29¢ (2) - Bill Pickett, Jim Beckwourth

Literary Arts (3) – Zora Neale Hurston 37¢, James Baldwin 37¢, Richard Wright 61¢, Ralph Ellison 91¢

Major League Baseball – All Stars 45¢ (2) – Larry Doby, Willie Stargell, Hank Aaron 73¢

Music Icons (4) – Ray Charles 46¢, Sarah Vaughn 49¢, Jimi Hendrix 49¢, Marvin Gaye 50¢

Negro League Baseball 44¢ (2) – Play at the Plate, Rube Foster

Performing Arts (1) – Duke Ellington 22¢

Pioneers of Communication (1) Frederick E. Ives 32¢

Prominent American Series (1) – Fredrick Douglass 25¢

Snowy Day (4) 49¢

Peter Making Footprints in the Snow

Peter Making A Snow Angel

Peter Making a Snowball

Peter Sliding in the Snow

To Form a More Perfect Union (10)

1965 Voting Rights Act

1957 Little Rock Nine

1961 Freedom Riders

1964 Civil Rights Act

1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott

1960 Lunch Counter Sit-ins

1948 Executive Order 9981

1965 Selma March

1954 Brown versus Board of Education

1963 March on Washington

Twentieth Century Poets 45¢ (2) – Gwendolyn Brooks, Robert Hayden

Underground Railroad (10 Stamps – 7 African Americans) - Forever

Harriet Tubman, *Catherine Coffin, Jarmain Loguen, Harriet Jacobs, William Still, *Thomas Garrett, Lewis Hayden, Frederick Douglass, William Lambert, and *Laura Haviland (*non-African-American)

Vintage Black Cinema (5) 42¢

Black and Tan, The Sport of the Gods, Caledonia, Hallelujah, Princesses Tam-Tam (Baker, Josephine)

Women in Journalism (1) – Ethel Payne 37¢

The numbers in parenthesis (#) indicate the number of stamps issued honoring African Americans in a particular category/series. You are invited to go on an exploratory journey to learn more about people of color depicted on stamps. To assist you in this, the Ebony Society of Philatelic Events and Reflections (ESPER) provides a website, www.esperstamps.org, to guide your exploration. This group was founded in 1988 by Esper Hayes for the purpose of promoting the heritage found in the world of stamps. Hayes was inspired to start the group



after meeting Jesse Owens and promising him that she would work to get more African Americans interested in stamps.

There are also stamps that bear the image of a person of color but are not named: for example, the stamp that was issued in 2004 for the purpose of raising awareness about sickle cell disease. There are many African American connections to many other stamps falling under various topics. Take the time to look at the stamps you receive in the mail. Ask for stamps relating to African American History when you purchase stamps. Please do your part to celebrate the heritage of people of color and be empowered to pass it on. We all are God’s children - valued and gifted.



Sources

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Library of America Website - www.loa.org/chesnutt/contexts.jsp

ESPER Website - www.esperstamps.org.

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“TAVIS SMILEY,” THE NATION’S MOST-SYNDICATED BLACK RADIO TALK SHOW ADDS FOUR MORE MAJOR MARKETS

By Matt Klink

LOS ANGELES: SmileyAudioMedia, Inc. is pleased to announce that four new affiliates have picked up “*Tavis Smiley*,” the most-syndicated Black radio talk show in America. The award-winning show, which appears on the “Heavy Hundred” list of the most important talk shows in the nation, features newsmakers, influencers, authors, artists, activists, entrepreneurs, and more. “*Tavis Smiley*” will now be carried on WERE 1490 AM (Cleveland, OH), WOLB 1010AM (Baltimore, MD), WDBZ 1230 AM (Cincinnati, OH), and KDEE 97.5 FM (Sacramento, CA) starting Monday, March 3, 2025.

“*Tavis Smiley*” now covers 40 markets across the United States, including prominent spots in the nation’s top three media markets - #1 (New York City), #2 (Los Angeles), and #3 (Chicago).

“The show’s expansion into four additional high-profile markets underscores our ongoing commitment to enhancing the show’s innovative and unapologetically progressive programming,” stated Tavis Smiley, owner of SmileyAudioMedia, Inc., Chief Visionary Officer for KBLA Talk 1580 in Los Angeles, and recipient of the prestigious “Freedom of Speech” Award from TALKERS.

“Following November’s election, the demand for our programming is growing exponentially. We will continue to deliver enlightening and empowering content aimed at African Americans and other people of color.”

Tavis Smiley will continue to serve as managing editor of his signature show, producing and syndicating the program with SmileyAudioMedia, Inc.

Until you talk to Tavis...the story is not complete. We’ve got a lot to talk about!

BACKGROUND:

On Juneteenth, June 19, 2021, KBLA Talk 1580 launched with the promise to give disenfranchised citizens a voice in current political, social and cultural issues with empowering, sustainable and restorative language. KBLA Talk 1580 consistently emerges as the station of choice for Black/African American residents. While KBLA Talk 1580 is unapologetically progressive, the station and its on-air talent prefer good ideas over ideology. The station’s guests and listeners share the wisdom of a lived experience that serves to enlighten others. Because KBLA’s audience is so diverse, each day is like a live town hall meeting over the airwaves.

ABOUT KBLA TALK 1580

KBLA Talk 1580 AM is a heritage station and the original home of the iconic hip-hop station KDAY. At 50,000 watts, day and night, KBLA serves a coverage area of nearly 12 million listeners. KBLA Talk 1580 boasts an all-star

lineup of hosts who speak candidly and passionately to the challenges people of color face daily trying to navigate life and realize their hopes and dreams. KBLA Talk 1580 serves an audience long ignored by talk radio in Los Angeles and now other American cities – people of color and progressives. For more information, visit KBLA1580.com.

ON A SOCIAL NOTE:

Follow us on Instagram: @KBLA1580

Friend us on Twitter: @KBLA1580

Friend us on Facebook: facebook.com/KBLA1580

Subscribe on YouTube: youtube.com/KBLA1580

GET THE APP!

Download the KBLA Talk 1580 app on iPhone or Android.



The Wilberforce University Chorus: Spring Tour 2025

By Nikiah S. Kerr

On Sunday, March 9, 2025, the historic First A.M.E. Zion Church in Columbus, Ohio, was filled with harmonious melodies as the Wilberforce University Chorus graced the sanctuary with an awe-inspiring, Spirit-filled, vivacious performance. The concert, part of the choir’s #WUTour2025, commenced at 4 PM and attracted a diverse audience, including HBCU Alumni, members of the Divine 9 Greek organizations, members from local A.M.E. churches, and local community members.

The Wilberforce University Chorus, representing the nation’s first historically black university in Wilberforce, OH (an affiliate of The A.M.E. Church), embarked on this Midwest tour to promote their latest recording project and to engage in recruitment efforts. The tour, spanning from March 9 to March 16, includes performances across



various cities, with the Columbus concert marking its tour opening.

Attendees at the First A.M.E. Zion Church enjoyed a comprehensive celebration of sheer Black excellence. Prior to the concert, local Black-owned small businesses were supported and championed. During their performance, the Wilberforce’s chorus showcased the choir’s versatility, ranging from traditional spirituals to contemporary gospel pieces. The concert concluded by paying homage to a living legend of First A.M.E. Zion Church, who celebrated 101 years of life this past February. The culmination of these remarkable moments amid First A.M.E. Zion Church’s intimate, historical setting inspired feelings of empowerment and hope for all generations.

As the #WUTour2025 continues, the Wilberforce University Chorus aims to inspire audiences across the Midwest by sharing their passion for music and their dedication to education and excellence.





Mr. Daman De Leon
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The effects of Autism & The Tools for Treatment

By Daman De Leon, Health and Wellness Editor

One of the health & wellness themes for the month of April is that it is National Autism Awareness Month. As an individual with an autistic sibling, there have been several educational aspects of this illness that I have learned, and I have embarked upon a personal journey to learn more about it. It is an unfortunate reality that many people with special needs will encounter hardship and discrimination throughout their lifetime. However, it is essential that we acknowledge the additional obstacles and stigma Black individuals with autism face. This issue of the intersectionality of race and ability is not often widely addressed, and because of this, many Black individuals on the spectrum continue to face great challenges in society and within their own communities.



Identity & Intersectionality

According to the Oxford Dictionary, intersectionality is defined as the multiple and complex identities we each have such as race, gender, class, etc. that creates and affects unique experiences of discrimination. The different and multiple identities a person may have leads to their experiences of oppression.

Black individuals with autism encounter obstacles and stigma within their own community and in society. This is because the Black community and the autism community are both marginalized, so individuals who lie in both of those categories face even more challenges. Stereotypes about Black people may be amplified when an individual presents symptoms on the spectrum. This is a result from the misconception that autism is less prevalent in the Black community when really disparities in care and education exist.

Access to Care

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), due to stigma and lack of health services in largely minority communities, Black people are significantly less likely to be identified and diagnosed with autism. Without a diagnosis, it is difficult to find treatment or intervention model that best suits one's needs. Access to quality resources allows individuals to have their needs met which can either improve development or quality of life.

The disparity of health services in Black communities creates a gap in access to care and physical, mental, and emotional health in general. Without proper access to care, those who experience social, cognitive, or behavioral challenges may continue to struggle due to the lack of intervention and services for their symptoms. According to the CDC, intervention and treatment is extremely beneficial, primarily for those at a young age. Treatment and intervention can help young children reduce symptoms and improve social, cognitive, or behavioral development. This has a huge impact on the lives of those with autism as well as the families of those with autism because proper health care and services allow for needs and challenges to be met which can positively affect future development and outcomes.

Stigma & Community Understanding

The lack of intersectional narratives leads to a lack of understanding and awareness of autism in the Black community. According to the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, cultural differences in healthcare access influence interpretations of symptoms. Since there are later and fewer diagnoses of autism in the Black community, doubts and misconceptions may arise when a Black child or individual presents symptoms of autism. Misconceptions from cultural percep-

tions can either lead to a lack of diagnosis or quality care.

Especially without a proper diagnosis, Black individuals with autism may be negatively interpreted as different, leading to an unwelcoming environment. Black individuals who may present the social or behavioral symptoms of autism may not be properly cared for or accepted in their community because they may be viewed as different in a negative way.



The stereotypes and discrimination Black individuals face are already dangerous as it is, but those things are multiplied when they have neglected special needs. Racially motivated stereotypes depict and describe Black individuals as aggressive and hostile, something that is awfully discriminatory. With the notion of intersectionality, both Black and autistic communities are marginalized, so some of the symptoms that appear with autism that are already stigmatized may amplify the stereotypes Black autistic individuals face. Rather than being patient and understanding of a Black individual on the spectrum, others may interpret certain behaviors as a matter of being disobedient, dramatic, or aggressive. This false narration is very damaging because it subjects Black individuals on the autism spectrum to harmful situations.

Police Brutality

The negative stereotypes and stigma Black individuals with autism face may put their lives at risk. It is known that police brutality is already a huge issue the minority communities are subject to. The justice system has failed several times to keep BIPOC communities safe. This is due to deep-rooted systemic racism.

Rather than using procedures to ensure the safety of Black individuals, especially those with autism or other special needs, police often times interpret mental health crises as aggressive and criminal behavior (TIME). This has resulted in several deaths and a high rate of incarceration of Black individuals on the spectrum.

We must work to dismantle and erase the stigma against Black individuals with autism and increase understanding of individuals with special needs—it could save a life.

How you can you help?

Carefully listen to the stories and experiences Black autistic individuals face in order to properly accommodate their needs. Use your voice to spread awareness and educate others on how harmful stereotypes are. Educating just one person can influence how they treat others, which can make a difference and possibly prevent future conflict. If you can, donate to local charities and/or enrichment programs designed to raise awareness and provide quality resources to community members.

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Ovarian Cancer: Awareness and Protection

By Daman De Leon, Health and Wellness Editor

Ovarian cancer is the fifth-leading cause of cancer death among women in the United States. Over the past few decades, there have been advances in the treatment of ovarian cancer, but not all racial and ethnic groups have benefited equally. For example, between 1975 and 2016, the 5-year relative survival rate for ovarian cancer increased from 33% to 48% among non-Hispanic White women but decreased from 44% to 41% in African-American women.

Potential reasons for this disparity have been suggested by previous studies. Researchers involved in two of the new studies have previously found, for example, that African-American women were more likely than non-Hispanic White women to have a reduction in the dose of chemotherapy, a delay in treatment, and early discontinuation of therapy.

The new studies, which will use different populations of patients, data, and methods, could help fill in the current gaps in knowledge, noted Lisa Gallicchio, Ph.D., an epidemiologist in DCCPS.

Focusing on Access to Care

Many women with ovarian cancer do not receive the treatments recommended by professional medical guidelines, particularly for African-American and Hispanic women, explained Tomi Akinyemiju, Ph.D., of the Duke University School of Medicine, who is leading the study that focuses on health care access.

"Lack of access to health care is likely to be a key factor in these low [treatment] rates," said Dr. Akinyemiju, noting that access to care is determined by many factors. For the study she is leading, the researchers have defined five dimensions of health care access: affordability, availability, accessibility, accommodation, and acceptability.

Using data from NCI's SEER program, from Medicare, and from patient surveys, the researchers will investigate racial disparities in three main areas—whether patients receive the recommended initial, or primary, treatment for ovarian cancer; supportive care for pain and depression; and survival.

The survey component will involve more than 1,000 women with ovarian cancer across seven states. By studying women who have just completed their initial treatment, the researchers hope to better understand the barriers patients experienced, including those associated with cost of care, travel to and from doctors' offices and hospitals for treatment, and interpersonal interactions with health care providers.

"Each of the five dimensions captures a distinct aspect of access, and barriers in one or more of these can significantly affect whether a patient receives quality care," Dr. Akinyemiju said. *"We can also examine differences between patients who reside in rural and urban areas, and between White, African-American, and Hispanic patients."*

"Lack of access to care has implications for everyone, and what we learn from this study will help us to design interventions to ensure quality care regardless of race or income level," she added.

Cells to Society

Another of the new studies brings together several lines of research to examine interactions among multiple factors that may contribute to ovarian cancer survival disparities across racial and ethnic groups.

"It is increasingly recognized that a multitude of factors affect cancer health disparities, and these factors range from biological to societal influences," said study co-leader Jennifer Doherty, Ph.D., of the University of Utah. *"Rather than focusing on single factors, we are conducting a comprehensive evaluation of their interplay."*

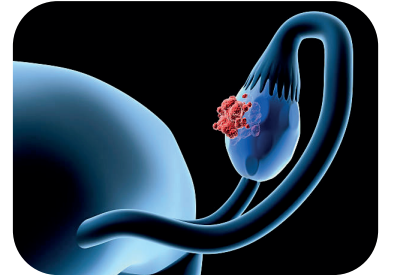
Dr. Doherty and her colleagues will analyze detailed clinical data and tumor samples collected from approximately 4,500 women with ovarian cancer who received care through Kaiser Permanente Northern California. The researchers will assess, for example, the characteristics of patients' tumors (such as the presence of specific genetic alterations),



patterns of treatment (such as the timing and type of surgery or chemotherapy and delays in treatment), and geographical factors (such as access to care) that may influence the care and prognosis of a woman with ovarian cancer.

"Many studies do not enroll women until several months or a year after diagnosis," she continued. *"Unfortunately, as ovarian cancer still has relatively poor survival, those studies are unable to obtain data from women who, at the time of enrollment, have already passed away, and may provide important information to understand factors influencing mortality."*

The study is being co-led by Elisa Bandera, M.D., Ph.D., of the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, Lawrence Kushi, Sc.D., of Kaiser Permanente Northern California, and Scarlett Gomez, Ph.D., of the UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center.



The goal of the third study is *"to better understand the complex causes of poor survival in African-American women with epithelial ovarian cancer,"* said study co-leader Joellen Schildkraut, Ph.D., M.P.H., of the Rollins School of Public Health and the Winship Cancer Center at Emory University.

Dr. Schildkraut and her colleagues are recruiting 350 African-American women newly diagnosed with ovarian cancer from eight state cancer registries. Data collected on these women will be incorporated into the African American Cancer Epidemiology Study-Exit Disclaimer, which already includes 600 women with the disease.

In previous research, the investigators found that inflammation associated with obesity or physical inactivity, or the use of certain painkillers, such as aspirin, might affect the risk of ovarian cancer. They also identified inherited genetic variants that might influence ovarian cancer risk in African-American women.

In the new study, the researchers will integrate information about participants' social and physical environments, such as unemployment rates and other measures of economic disadvantage, with information about the women's inflammation-related exposures and data on inflammatory pathways in their tumor tissues.

"The geographical diversity of this group and the breadth of data and biospecimens from participants will give us an unprecedented opportunity to explore factors involved in survival differences among African Americans with ovarian cancer," said Dr. Schildkraut.

Taking Steps to Eliminate Disparities

All three new studies will help researchers to better understand why certain groups of patients with ovarian cancer do worse than others. This research is an important step toward addressing the disparities in ovarian cancer survival, noted Dr. Elena.

"Access to care," she continued, *"as well as economic factors and gaps in health insurance, influence disparities, not only for ovarian cancer, but for people with many other cancers."*

"By investigating biological factors, behavioral factors, and societal influences to learn which factors are driving the disparities," Dr. Elena said, *"these studies can help researchers develop new strategies to improve the care of women with the worst outcomes for this cancer."*

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Bricks, Mortar, and Ministry: Christian Developers Change Lives

By Dana G. Stilley, Financial Freedom Editor

The landscape of Winston-Salem will soon be transformed, thanks to the newly signed contract between Pastor George Banks and the Goler Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church and C2 Contractors, LLC, owned and operated by Mr. Cornelius Lamberth. With vision, fortitude, and a strong belief in the power of God, Pastor Banks and Mr. Lamberth will forge ahead to develop much-needed workforce and senior housing, a daycare center, and a sports complex on the property owned by Goler Memorial Church. This project promises to significantly impact the wealth development opportunities for the surrounding Black community.



The congregation of Goler Memorial and Pastor Banks believe this is truly a “testimony of God’s grace.” Like many churches, Goler Memorial found itself in financial straits during the Covid-19 pandemic. Two failed attempts to sell the property to eliminate debt, a looming balloon payment, and the threat of foreclosure weighed heavily on the Pastor and congregation. Despite those challenges, the church remained steadfast in its belief in God’s promises. Guidance from the late Bishop George Battle, Jr., Pastor Banks’s knowledge and experience as a licensed real estate agent in the area, and the church’s dedicated prayer ministry saw them through. Pastor Banks said, “It was like a Paul and Macedonia moment. I dreamt of what the church should like.” Shortly thereafter, Goler Memorial finalized a real estate transaction that allowed them to liquidate all outstanding debt and purchase a 15000 square foot building on 27 acres of land without borrowing any funds. Free from debt and with a vision of the future, Pastor Banks is now leading his congregation forward with a plan that will enhance the church’s financial future.



This set the stage for the alliance with Cornelius Lamberth of C2 Contractors, LLC. Founded in 1984, C2 Contractors (formerly CoMor Corporation) is an industry leading cabling and construction firm with a long history of providing outstanding service in construction/project management, information technology, building diagnostics and commercial interiors and design.



Named among the top 50 most progressive Black owned companies in the country by the Minority Business Development Agency in 2004, C2 Construction is known for their outstanding professionalism and the excellence they bring to every project.

Cornelius Lamberth, the President and CEO of C2 Contractors, is a friendly, Christian gentleman who is focused on educating, empower-

ing, and giving back to his community. Having benefited greatly from the support of mentors early in his career, he strives to create and nurture relationships that will allow him to open doors for others. A graduate of NC A&T State University and the Executive Management Development Program in the Anderson School of Management at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), Cornelius is committed to partnering with faith-based leaders to engage in a business conversation with the goal of “building a sustainability model, creating an economic engine and filling the needs of the parishioners and community.”



In addition to developing workforce and senior housing, a daycare center, and a sports complex on the Goler Memorial property, the plans include the construction of a new dedicated worship space. The current worship space, which was home to the finale of Zions Finest in 2023, and will once again host this year’s Zions Finest on July 22, will become a full-time event center to host plays, concerts, and other community-centered activities once the new sanctuary is completed.

The Senior Bishop of The A.M.E. Zion Church and the Presiding Bishop of the Piedmont Episcopal District, Darryl B. Starnes, Sr., said, “This is an opportunity for the church to use its property to bless the entire community, not just the church. We are proud of the visionary leadership and ministry that is far-reaching. It takes great cooperation and coordination to accomplish something of this magnitude. I salute the Pastor, officers, and the people.”



In addition to the partnership with Goler Memorial A.M.E. Zion, Lamberth is currently developing for the Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Greensboro, NC, of which he is a member. The master plan for this project includes a full-scale medical facility, as well as a cultural arts center. Lamberth credits his ability to build and nurture long-lasting relationships to his success. Recognizing that the fastest way to grow is to purchase or partner, he relies on his faith and extensive outreach to gain access to people and businesses who are interested in becoming development partners. This enables the churches to maintain the valuable land while providing much-needed services to the public.



These two significant projects promise to enrich the lives of many. The vast scope of the proposed developments will offer job opportunities, financial stability, safe and affordable housing, access to healthcare, and increased opportunities for social and cultural engagement. Pastor Banks and Cornelius Lamberth also hope that other Black churches will embrace this concept and let this great work serve as a blueprint to follow.

Updates on these projects will be provided as the next steps unfold.



A GLOBAL LEADERSHIP VIEW OF THE A.M.E. ZION CHURCH



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Mrs. Camille C. Starnes, Missionary Supervisor



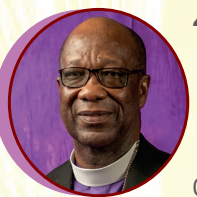
2. Bishop W. Darin Moore EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

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4. Bishop Hilliard K. Dogbe WESTERN WEST AFRICA EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

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5. Bishop U. U. Effiong EASTERN WEST AFRICA EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

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6. Bishop Brian R. Thompson, Sr. MID-ATLANTIC EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

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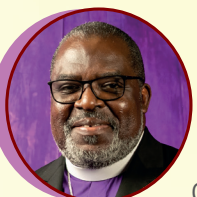
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Bishop George Edward Battle, Jr.

May 14, 1947 – March 9, 2025

George Edward Battle, Jr. was born May 14, 1947, in Edgecombe County, NC. He graduated from Clinton Jr. College in 1967, and he earned his B.A. from Livingstone College in 1969. He earned the M.Div. degree from Hood Theological Seminary in 1972. He received his Doctor of Ministry degree from the Howard University School of Divinity in 1990.

While a student at Clinton, he attended St. Matthews A.M.E. Zion Church, where he preached his Trial Sermon in 1966, and he was admitted into the South Carolina Annual Conference in 1967. His first pastoral assignment was at Center Grove Circuit in Tobaccoville, NC, in 1966. From there, he was sent to the Mt. Vernon Circuit in Statesville, NC. While at Mt. Vernon, he was ordained a deacon in 1967. He was appointed Pastor of the Foundation Tabernacle Circuit in Rock Hill, SC, in 1968 and was ordained an Elder. In 1972, he was sent to Mt. Zion in Lancaster, SC, and in 1974, he was appointed Pastor of the Gethsemane A.M.E. Zion Church in Charlotte, NC. While at Gethsemane, Rev. Battle had a tremendous impact on the city of Charlotte. He was elected to the Charlotte-Mecklenberg Board of Education in 1978 and served as a member of the Board until 1995. He was elected Chairman of the Board in 1990 and held this position until his resignation from the Board in 1995.



At the Forty-Fourth Quadrennial Session of the General Conference, which met at Shaw Temple A.M.E. Zion Church in Atlanta, GA, Rev. Battle was elected the 84th Bishop in the line of succession of The A.M.E. Zion Church, and he was assigned the Palmetto, Pee Dee, South Carolina, Georgia, and South Georgia Annual Conferences. After the death of Bishop Herman Anderson in 1995, he was assigned to the Central North Carolina and Virgin Islands Annual Conferences. In 1996, he was assigned to the Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District and served there 8 years. In 2004, he was assigned to the North Eastern Episcopal District and served there for 8 years. In 2012, he was assigned to the Piedmont Episcopal District as the Senior Bishop of The A.M.E. Zion Church and served until his retirement in 2021.

Bishop George Edward Battle Jr. transitioned to eternal rest on March 9, 2025, leaving behind a legacy of faith, love, and service. Though we grieve his loss, we celebrate the profound impact he made on all who knew him. May his soul rest in peace, and his memory live on in the hearts of those he touched. He was married to the former Iris Miller, and they have two children: George Edward the III and LaChandra, and a host of grandchildren.

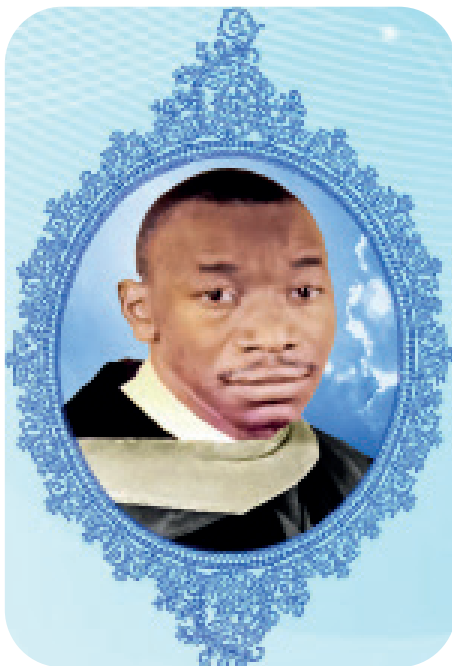
Rev. James Wesley Britt

March 1, 1933 – March 17, 2025

James Wesley Britt was born in the chief town of Greene County, Snow Hill, NC on March 1, 1933 to John Henry Britt and Emma Lee Edwards Britt. He was the sixth of eight children, four girls and four boys. He transitioned from earth to heaven on Monday, March 17, 2025. Reverend Britt was married to the late Doris Lett Britt for 54 years.

Reverend James W. Britt attended Greene County Training School, where he received his primary, elementary and high school education. His educational record reflects that he enrolled at Livingstone College and earned a B.A. Degree in history. He later entered Hood Theological Seminary and received a B.D. Degree. In a search to continue to prepare himself in order to serve humanity, he earned a M.A. Degree in history from the North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina.

Reverend Britt served indefatigably as a pastor in the A.M.E. Zion Church for a multiplicity of

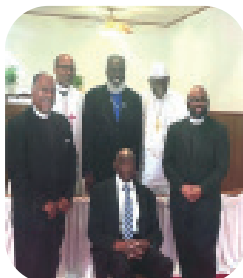


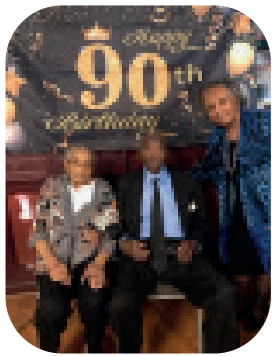
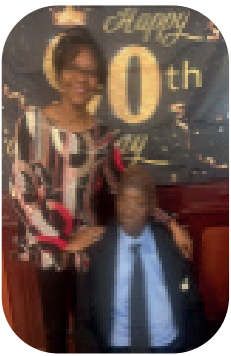
years. His record shows that he has untrammelled love for God, his family, the A.M.E. Zion Church and humankind in general.

Reverend Britt's distinguished career reveals that he served with fourteen bishops and fourteen presiding elders. He was grateful unto Almighty God for allowing him to be one of his Word bearers in two centuries. He toiled day and night to be a blessing to the congregations he had been sent to pastor.

In addition to his ministerial service, he served as a classroom instructor on the Junior High School level,

as well as the secondary level. It is interesting to mention that Rev. Britt served with four principals and five superintendents. He taught over four thousand five hundred students during





his teaching career. He would often say to his comrades, "I have taught them all." Reverend Britt was a football coach and a basketball coach. He was the chairman of the History Department of two different school systems.

Reverend Britt contributed to several great journals: The Star of Zion, The Standard Laconic and The Cape Fear Informer. It is noteworthy

to indicate that among Rev. Britt's other works are a pamphlet—"A Concise History of The Raleigh District" and a book entitled, Tributes, Meditations and Short Articles.

Reverend Britt leaves to cherish his memories: his oldest sister, Minnie Jackson of Newark, NJ; his younger brother, John Henry Britt (Geraldine) of Camden NJ; his baby sister Ella Phillips of Snow Hill, NC; his brother-in-law, Nathaniel Lett (Tee) of Knightdale, NC, and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

OPINION

One Man's Perspective

By Alonzo Braggs

Here is my response to the ongoing slate of unconstitutional executive orders, coupled with the abuse of authority for elected and appointed officials and the overt attempt to enslave any who are outside the ranks of the non-white male under the pretense of making America great again. In this attempt, it is clear and obvious that no one and no entity will not be impacted with some measure of harm, temporary or permanent, and unfortunately, sacrifices will be made internally and within the ranks of the would-be oppressors because the desired outcome is valued greater, than the present alignments, statues, or relationships.

This project 2025 has been carefully proposed and corruptly implemented. When was this country great? For whom was it great? Can we really assign greatness during a season of murder, rape, and pilferage? Was greatness emancipating the enslaved while not equipping the same and invoking statutes that stifled their growth or progress? Was greatness during an era where, legislatively, all are viewed equal, but socially and systemically, denials sustained the assurance of subordination and poverty? These efforts are not designed to better the total humanity of our country but to enhance the immoral and unhealthy gain and advancement of the truly terrified minority: the white male club.

These abuses of offices have never been about hitting the target of greatness in accordance with policy, protocols, and procedures, nor was it ever about playing by the rules of traditional values, ethics, morals, or what's right. This is a severe, intentional, and surgical response to the greatest fear that the white male American has: the loss of wealth and power.

To sustain this, they continue to evidence the need to sacrifice, oppress, and suppress, even



internally, because statistically, the white female has been the greatest benefactor of social programming. That's why their position for white women is to stay at home, have babies, and not vote but simply obey them. That leaves the white male club making the decisions and their spouses helping by adding to their numbers so they can secure positions of power, remain in power, and control wealth.

But this isn't a century ago. We who are African Americans are wiser, and our oppressors are weaker and more afraid, having lacked the strengthening experiences of real struggle and extreme survival. Our newer generations will revolt and overtake, even more conspicuously and strategically, and without the reservations of potential hurt or harm or the sensitivity to peace and nonviolence. We will not be told merely anything, and we can simply believe or accept it. You can guarantee that challenging the status quo will definitely be a part of our response.

Finally, to those who seek to enlarge and strengthen their army through the denial of planned parenthood and individual health care, know that this process will enable us to become more populated, powerful, and political while outnumbering your failed tactics. The quote, "The South will rise again." has a new meaning in 2025. The global televising of the next revolution, seeming is edging closer and closer, to a meeting at those two modern-day intersections, where one street is named find out!

The attached picture is one of my great-great-grandmothers, Caroline Powell Brown. She and her husband, Ephiram, worked and earned enough money to buy the land known today as Browntown, North Carolina. This lane was divided among their ten children. In addition to family lots, it housed a school, two churches, and a cemetery. Today, because of taxation, ignorance, systemic racism, and a loss of hope mixed with broken promises, this community is barely recognizable as a great family land site. In the spirit of Caroline, her daughter Hattie, Hattie's son Porter, and Porter's daughter Idell who was my mother, I lift my voice, crying loud and sparing not.

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