Greater Mt. Baker Missionary Baptist Church Celebrates 63rd Church Anniversary This Week

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Unemployment May Worsen For Black Workers

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NAACP-LDF Leader Calls For Civil Rights Focus On 'New Economy'

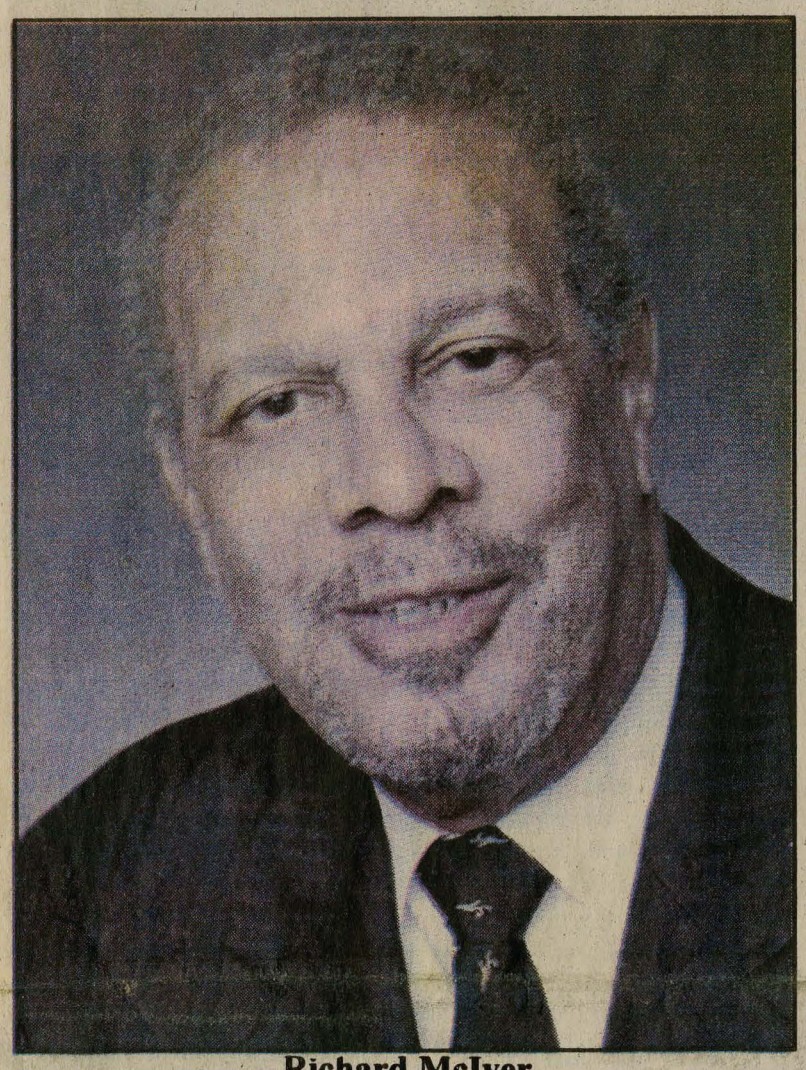
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The Seattle Medium

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VOLUME 44, NUMBER 11 | NOW IN OUR 44TH YEAR | (206) 323-3070 | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2013

Community Mourns The Loss Of Former Seattle City Councilman Richard McIver



Richard McIver

Former Seattle City Councilman Richard McIver, 71, died Saturday night at Swedish Medical Center in Seattle.

McIver, known for speaking his mind and speaking up for under-represented communities, was selected from 114 applicants to fill a vacancy on the Council in January 1997. He was elected to the position that fall, and was re-elected in 2001 and 2005. In 2009, McIver retired from the City Council as he chose not to run for re-election.

McIver, a fifth generation Seattlelite, was born to Mildred Artis-McIver and Willaim McIver, II on June 14, 1941. He graduated from Garfield High School in 1959, and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Western Washington University.

Richard spent most of his career in neighborhood housing advocating for rejuvenation for the unrepresented poor community. Prior to his appointment to the City Council, McIver worked for the Washington Association of Community Economic Development and Tacoma Housing Authority.

During his tenure on the City Council, McIver chaired the Council's Housing & Economic Development Committee; chaired the Council's Budget & Finance Committee from 2004 – 2007; served on the Puget Sound Regional Council's Economic Development and Operations Committee; and served on a host of other city and regional committees.

During the World Trade Organization (WTO) protest in 1999, McIver was driving to a World Trade Organization (WTO) event when was stopped by a Seattle Police Officer who did not recognize him. The officer did not believe McIver was a public official and made his stand spread-eagle against his car while the officer frisked and almost arrested McIver.

Undoubtedly, the Seattle Police (SPD) WTO abuse incident was a very low point in McIver's political career, however, the well-respected, low-key City Councilman used this unfortunate incident as a teaching tool and opportunity to rein in the Seattle Police Department abusive tactics against Black and other minority citizens.

McIver was also instrumental in the establishment of the Rainier Valley Community Development Fund, which was established to help small businesses in Rainier Valley that were impacted light rail construction. McIver served as executive director of the organization after he retired from the Council.

As of press time, the cause of McIver's death was not known. However, he had been battling health issues for some time. McIver, who most recently suffered a stroke, had reportedly regained his ability to walk after three years of rehabilitation.

McIver leave to cherish his loving memory; wife Marlaina Kiner-McIver, daughter Mimi, grandson Michael (Texas),a niece Lisa, Seattle, a host of relatives and other extend family, friends and thousands of political constituents. He was preceded in death by his parents Mildred and William McIver, Jr. and Brother Williams "Billy" McIver III, and an his Uncle, famed civil right attorney, James "Jim" McIver.

Funeral arrangements are pending. Tune into the Z-Twins radio stations (1420 KRIZ, 1560 KZIZ & 1620 KYIZ) for more information as it is released by the family.

Racially Insensitive Game Finds New Home On Amazon

By Chris B. Bennett
Co-publisher/editor

Ghettopoly – a racially insensitive game modeled after the popular monopoly board game – is stirring up controversy once again. The game, which uses stereotypes often related to African Americans as the butt of its humor, was removed from the shelves from Urban Outfitters in 2003 after a nationwide protest by the NAACP that ultimately led to the game being barred from sale in the United States after Hasbro, makers of the game monopoly, sued the inventor of the game, David Chang, for copyright infringement.

According to Kathy Carpano, a spokesperson for Hasbro, "the company was successful in obtaining a default judgment against Mr. Chang and in June of 2006, the Court issued a permanent injunction against the Ghettopoly game and Hasbro was awarded both damages and costs."

However, despite the permanent injunction, the game, which features a pimp, a hoe, a 40-ounce bottle, a machine gun (oozie), a marijuana leaf, a basketball and a piece of crack as game pieces, is once again available for sale — most notably through Seattle-based, online retail giant Amazon at a premium price of $114.99.

The game's official website automatically re-directs visitors to the page where the product is sold on the Amazon website.

According to a domain registration search, the domain is registered under Ghetto Poly Inc. The domain registration was last updated in August 2013, and lists Chang as both the administrative and technical contact.

In a 2003 interview with The Seattle Medium Chang, who emigrated at age eight from Taiwan with his family, said he views the game as humorous and not degrading.

"Ghettopoly is controversial because its both fun and real life," Chang told The Medium. "The graphics on the board depict every race in the country and both genders. It draws on stereotypes not as a means to degrade, but as a medium to bring together in laughter. If we can't laugh at ourselves and how we each utilize the various stereotypes, then we'll continue to live in blame and bitterness."



Hasbro, the makers of Monopoly, received a permanent injunction against the ghettopoly board game in 2006. Yet, despite the injunction, the game is still available for sale in the United States. Inset Picture: One of the game's 'Ghetto Stash' cards is the equivalent to Monopoly's Community Chest cards.

According to a press release promoting the game, Chang did his market research by watching MTV and studying the lyrics of rap and hip-hop music, and video games provided him insight into the culture of the ghetto allowing him to come up with the names of the properties of the game in just a few hours.

Chang doesn't feel that the game depicts any single group, rather that it pokes fun at everything associated with the ghetto.

"The playing of the game is not to offend people, that's not my intention," stated Chang. "It's a satire. If they can't see that there is nothing I can do about that. I'm not here to convince them otherwise."

However, many African American leaders found the game to be offensive as it allows players to buy crack houses and projects instead of houses and hotels. Property names include: Ray Ray's Chicken and Ribs, Harlem, Busta Rap Recording, Malcolm X Ave., Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. and Hernando's Chop Shop. In addition, instead of having railroads like the original monopoly games, players can purchase liquor stores. One of the Ghetto Stash cards (equivalent to Monopoly's Community Chest cards) reads: "You got yo whole neighborhood addicted to crack. Collect $50 from each player."

Carl Mack, former president of the Seattle/King County NAACP, did not find the game funny or amusing.

"Everything about the game is degrading," said Mack during an interview with The Medium in 2003. "It promotes every insensitive and racial stereotype that America has been in the forefront of creating with Black folks."

Mack and a former member of the NAACP, Eric Dawson, were the catalyst of the 2003 nationwide protest of the game when they went into the Downtown Seattle Urban Outfitters store and demanded that they game be taken off the shelf.

The recent discovery that the game is once again available for sale, has many in the African American community questioning the availability of the game through a retailer like Amazon.

The Medium contacted Amazon regarding the sale of the game on their website. According to Amazon's website, 'listings for items that Amazon deems offensive are prohibited on Amazon.com. Amazon reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of listings on its site, and remove any listing at any time.' Examples of prohibited listings include, 'Products that promote or glorify hatred, violence, racial, sexual or religious intolerance or promote organizations with such views.'

When asked by The Medium, if this game [Ghettopoly] would fall under this category? And If so, why is it allowed to be sold on amazon.com. Amazon responded by saying, "Amazon will not be releasing comment."

"All that this is, is another example of a company that is willing to make money off a product regardless of the racial indignity or racial insensitivity of that product," said Mack of Amazon's response. "Amazon is just as guilty as he is [David Chang]. If they know about it and don't do a thing about it then they are just as racially insensitive as this guy, David Chang, is."

"Here is their policy about racial insensitive material," Continued Mack. "Given their policy, they still don't appear to have a problem with selling this [game]. In our minds they don't value diversity, and they certainly don't value the dignity of Black folks as clients."

As of press time, six days after being contacted, Amazon still has the game available for sale on their website.

"It appears to me, that they [Amazon] will not do the right thing until they are forced to do the right thing, and that is something that we should always remember," said Mack.

City Council Committee To Host Public Hearing For Community Police Commission Appointees

Seattle City Councilmember Bruce Harrell, chair of the Council's Public Safety, Civil Rights and Technology Committee, will convene a special committee meeting on Weds., Mar. 13 at 5:30 p.m. to consider legislation to move forward on the implementation of the Settlement Agreement with the Department of Justice (DOJ). The meeting will be held the Council Chambers located on the second floor of Seattle City Hall - 600 Fourth Avenue.

The committee will begin the meeting with a public hearing on the 15 Mayoral appointments to the Community Police Commission. All 15 members were appointed by the Mayor and are subject to confirmation by the City Council. Last October, the Council formally established the DOJ agreement's Community Police Commission. At that time, the Council established a clear selection criterion to ensure the members are representative of Seattle s diverse population and are in a position to impartially review and make recommendations on policies related to use of force and biased policing.

The appointments are: Claudia D'Allegri, Sea Mar Community Health Centers, Vice President of Behavioral Health; **Lisa Daugaard**, Co-chair, Defender Association, Deputy Director; **Kate Joncas**, Downtown Seattle Association, President and CEO; **Bill Hobson**, Downtown Emergency Services Center, Executive Director; **Jay Hollingsworth**, John T. Williams Organizing Committee; **Joseph Kessler**, Seattle Police Department, Captain; **Diane Narasaki**, Co-chair, Asian Counseling & Referral Service, Executive Director; **John Page**, Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, Program Coordinator at the Defender Association's Racial Disparity Project; **Tina Podlodowski**, former Seattle

(Cont'd. On Page 2)

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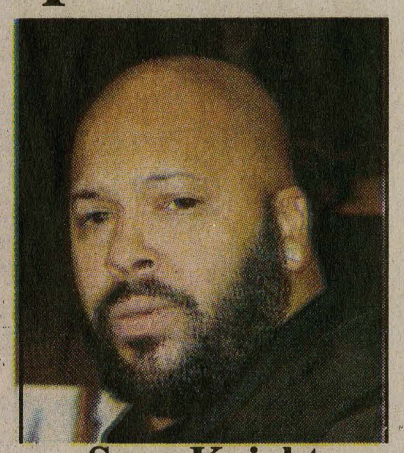
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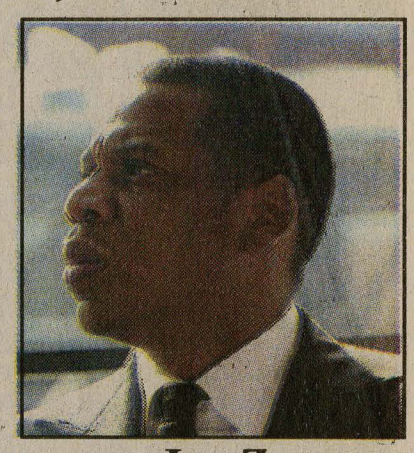
ENTERTAINMENT

It's A Rap: March 7, 2013

By Kennith Miller
Special to the NNPA from the Los Angeles Sentinel



Suge Knight



Jay-Z

Is it Dre. ? Is it Dre?...

Suge Knight recently appeared on the Howard Stern show and he had some really crazy things to say about Dr. Dre, as he accuses the good doctor of being gay, and a snitch.

During the interview, Suge said Dre recently went to his P.O. and snitched on him, which caused his P.O. to put a special case in the conditions of his parole. He says the special case, was basically a restraining order against him.

As the interview continued, Suge says Dr. Dre has been sleeping with a man named "Bruce" for years.

He said during a meeting with the late Tupac and Dre where they would put everything on the table, Pac stood up and said I'm tired of this, "Dre you're a f*ggot." Dre replied "first of all Im not a f*ggot, I'm bi-sexual."

No Jay-Z Approval

According to various online reports Jay-Z is "extremely upset" that his mentee Rihanna is spending time with the man who severely beat her three years ago.

With Chris Brown and Rihanna collaborating on duets together and meeting in secret, according to multiple reports, the rap mogul has reportedly express disappointment.

"Jay was absolutely disgusted by what Chris did to Rihanna. Jay doesn't understand how a man could ever lay hands on a woman; it just goes against who he is and about. Chris is absolutely dead to Jay, he wants nothing to do with him ever," said the source.

"Now that Rihanna is hooking up with Chris and recording songs with him, Jay is deeply disappointed in her actions. He can't fathom why Rihanna is doing the things she is doing. He understands the need for forgiveness, but he is adamant that Rihanna shouldn't forget what Chris did to her. Jay wonders what kind of message this is sending to Rihanna's young female fans. Rihanna knows how Jay feels about Chris, but she doesn't care, she is going to do what she wants."

Now that Jay-Z is a proud daddy to daughter, Blue Ivy, with wife Beyoncé, "he is even more protective of the women in his life," says the insider. "Jay has told Rihanna he will never give his blessing for what she is doing with Chris. He has told her, this isn't going to end well, it never does. In Jay's opinion, Chris has rage issues that he doesn't think have been dealt with."

The Skinny On The 'Shake'

It's called the Harlem Shake. The University of Georgia men's swim and dive team did it underwater in Speedos. The Norwegian army did it in the snow. The latest viral dance video craze starts with one dancer — jamming out on his own — surrounded by what appear to be oblivious bystanders. But then, all of a sudden, everybody's dancing.

The meme started when YouTube comedian Filthy Frank took "Harlem Shake" by Brooklyn-based Latino producer Baauer and played off the wild dubstep drop 15 seconds into the song. That's when everything gets wild.

But this Harlem Shake is not quite like the original. Filmmaker Chris McGuire even went out on the streets of Harlem to get reactions to the videos. To quote one resident, "That's not the Harlem Shake at all. That's humpin', and that's not the Harlem Shake."

So where did the original dance actually come from?

"It's been around for decades. Most people trace it back to a street dancer named Al B, who used to entertain the crowd at the Rucker tournament, which is a legendary basketball league in Harlem," says Jay Smooth, Harlemite and host of the hip-hop video blog Ill Doctrine. "It was brought into the mainstream by one of my Harlem neighbors, Sean 'P. Diddy' Combs, who brought the dance into a couple videos he made with one of his artists, G Dep."

As dance styles do, the trend faded as it stayed true in Harlem. But when the meme appeared on YouTube, it wasn't anything like what Al B did.

"You'd shimmy really quickly and swing your arms back and forth, then freeze and start up again," Smooth tells NPR's Melissa Block. "[Al B] had a really elaborate story as far as what he saw as the origin of the dance, tracing it back to mummies in Africa, I believe, who couldn't fully use their bodies because they were wrapped up in the mummy robes."

Fantasia Is Back

Fantasia had nowhere else to run but to the studio when she was finally ready to reveal some of her deepest trials and struggles. Admitting that her forthcoming album, "Side Effects of You," is her blood, sweat and tears, Fantasia says the music on this album is like ministering to her fans — people that she calls her family.

"I'm going to say it this way. I had nowhere else to go but to my music. There were things that we were still fixing and knots that we were still trying to untangle in dealing with Fantasia. I had nowhere else to go but there. I had nowhere else to reveal it. I'm a soul singer. I don't know where else to reveal it so, I put my all into this album," Fantasia shared in a recent interview.

Claiming that music is her blessing, Fantasia says she had no choice but to be honest about life on "Side Effects of You."

"I felt like at this point, for me, my music makes me happy and my children make me happy and I need to put my love in both of those. So my children are my kids and my music is my blessing and I want to be good to it. I feel like I should put my all, my honesty, my blood, sweat and tears when it comes to the live shows and giving the people good music," she told Richmond's Kiss 105.7 FM. "It's like a ministry thing from me to my family. I feel like my music is how we relate so I had to put it there."

While it's unclear what Fantasia will say in each song and just how far she'll go, the album does start off with the moving single "Lose To Win." Relating that song to her life, Fantasia believes that it was only right that she take her time to promote this album so that more people will know about it and be able to listen.

"For me as an artist I know what I want and I know what I need. I felt like we should push it back so that we could promote it and let everybody know about it," Fantasia said of the album's recent delay. "It's a very special project."

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Fire Department To Host Open House At New Central Area Fire Station

The Seattle Fire Department will host an open house this Sat., Mar. 16 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.at its brand new Fire Station 6, located at 405 Martin Luther King Jr. Way S. in the Central District.

"The fire stations and the firefighters are an integral part of the communities they serve. This is a chance for residents to meet the men and women who serve their area," says Fire Chief Gregory Dean

Fire Station 6 is one of 32 neighborhood fire stations being upgraded, renovated or replaced through the Fire Facilities and Emergency Response Program, which was approved by Seattle voters in 2003. Construction on the $5.9 million station began in August 2011 and was completed in January 2013. Eight personnel are on duty at the station per shift.

"This is a chance for the Seattle residents to see their tax dollars at work," says Mayor Mike McGinn. "It's vital our firefighters have earthquake resilient facilities in order to respond to major disasters or emergencies."



Photo courtesy of Mike Heaton.

The new 11,200 square foot facility meets seismic code and is designed to be safely occupied following an earthquake. A diesel-powered generator allows the building to run for 72 hours should the building lose electricity.

The new Fire Station 6 replaces a 4,060 square foot station built in 1931 and located at 101 23rd Ave. S. The former station 6's existing configuration, site terrain and historic character ruled out an on-site expansion.

A new apparatus bay provides the space the ladder truck and engine require. Features of the new facility to protect firefighters include a decontamination room and areas to avoid contaminating clean spaces with chemicals and toxic substances. Additional room for equipment includes a bunker gear room and storage space for modern firefighting equipment.

Fire Station 6 is one of the busiest in the city, tallying 3289 emergency responses in 2012.

The Seattle Fire Department's goal for "turnout time" – the time it takes for a firefighter to get to the vehicles and out of the building from any place on site – is one minute or less 90 percent of the time. For the fire department, this was the single most important thing to think about during building design. One unique feature – "scissor stairs" – maximizes Fire Station 6's small footprint and helps achieve the quick turnout time. Scissor stairs are a set of two interlocking stairways providing two separate exit paths within one stairwell enclosure.

The new building reflects the city's commitment to green design practices. Seattle is seeking a LEED gold certification for the facility, which includes recycled construction materials; low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paints, carpets and plywood; lots of natural light coming through double-glazed windows; energy-efficient lighting tied to occupancy and daylight sensors; permeable parking areas allowing water to infiltrate naturally rather than draining directly into a storm drain; a vegetated roof that helps control run off and moderate building temperatures; and water-efficient plantings. What little water that will be required for irrigation comes from roof run-off held in underground storage tanks. The building has been wired to accept power from future solar panels planned for the roof. Power generated from solar panels can be used for the building, or given to Seattle City Light for use elsewhere.

A traffic signal, triggered by a firefighter in the building when they are preparing to leave on an emergency call, will keep the intersection at Martin Luther King Jr. Way South and South Jackson Street clear when fire rigs exit the station.

Bill To Remove Unfair Housing Practices Clears Senate

OLYMPIA – A bill to ensure victims of domestic violence have fair and equal access to housing passed the Senate on Monday night.

Senate Bill 5568, sponsored by Sen. Steve Hobbs, D-Lake Stevens, received a 46-3 vote and will now move to the House for further consideration.

This bill, the Fair Tenant Screening Act Part 2, expands the original act to include protections for victims of domestic violence.

"We made great progress on the Fair Tenant Screening Act a few years ago and this bill helps finish the work we started on it," Hobbs said. "Being a victim of domestic violence is a trauma I couldn't imagine. There's no reason why someone should have to have that horrible incident brought up again while looking for a home. This bill prevents that from happening."

Currently, tenant screening reports are allowed to contain information about domestic violence protection orders and eviction lawsuits. This bill will remove that information from those reports.

Constantine Orders Inquest Into Fatal Police Shooting Of Man At Central Area Nightclub

Last Friday, King County Executive Dow Constantine ordered an inquest into the fatal police shooting of James Anderson at a Central Area nightclub on January 27, 2013.

Police say the 32-year old man shot and wounded two people at the Twilight Exit at 2514 East Cherry St. When officers arrived and identified themselves, police say Anderson fired at them and one officer returned fire, killing Anderson.

King County Prosecutor Dan Satterberg recommended the inquest after his office reviewed materials from the Seattle Police Department, which conducted the investigation.

Inquests are fact-finding hearings conducted before a six-member jury. Under a standing Executive Order they are routinely called to determine the causes and circumstances of any death involving a member of any law enforcement agency within King County while in the performance of his or her duties.

The order signed by the Executive requests King County District Court Presiding Judge Corinna Harn to assign a judge to set a date and conduct the inquest.

House Approves Compensation For Wrongful Convictions

By Rachel La Corte
Associated Press

OLYMPIA (AP) - The state House on Friday approved a measure that allows people who were wrongfully convicted to seek compensation from the state for the years they lost behind bars.

The measure passed on a 95-2 vote Friday night and now heads to the Senate for consideration. If passed, Washington would join 27 states, the District of Columbia and the federal government with similar laws on the books.

Rep. Tina Orwall, a Democrat from Normandy Park who sponsored the bill, said that of all of the measures she has been involved with before, ``none have impacted me as much as the bill before you."

The measure would allow people who were wrongfully convicted to file a claim in superior court for damages against the state. The claimant must show their conviction was reversed or vacated based on significant evidence of innocence, and that they did not commit the crime they were charged with. Once a judge or jury determines the claim is valid, they can award damages.

Currently, the only option someone has is to sue the state, but they are required to sue on some basis other than the fact that they were wrongfully convicted, such as intentional wrongdoing or prosecutorial misconduct.

Under the bill, compensation would be similar to the amounts paid by the federal government _ a wrongly convicted person would receive $50,000 for each year of imprisonment, including time spent awaiting trial. An additional $50,000 would be awarded for each year on death row. A person would receive $25,000 for each year on parole, community custody, or as a registered sex offender.

The state also would pay all child support owed while the claimant was in custody, and reimburse all court and attorneys' fees up to $75,000. In addition, in-state college tuition waivers would be provided for the claimant and the claimant's children and/or step-children.

Orwall mentioned the case of Alan Northrop, who was convicted of rape in 1993 and was cleared by DNA evidence after serving 17 years in prison. Northrup testified in earlier public hearings that the hardest part of his time behind bars was not being able to watch his children grow up.

``This compensation is a way for us to say we're sorry," Orwall said. ``It's a way for them to rebuild their lives."

A fiscal note attached to the bill indicates the impact on the state can't be determined at this time due to all the varying factors, such as the number of claims, years on parole and legal costs, in addition to the college costs. An amendment introduced on the House floor seeking to cap the compensation at $300,000 was rejected.

Supporters of state compensation say the cost to the state is a small price to pay to repair a life.

``How much is your life worth?" asked Republican Rep. Matt Shea of Spokane, as he spoke in support of the measure. ``How much is the enjoyment of your children, of your wife, of going outdoors, how much is that worth?"

The wrongful conviction measure is House Bill 1341.

Two Off-duty Seattle Police Officers Charged With DUIs

Last Thursday, the Seattle City Attorney's Office charged two off-duty police officers with one count each of misdemeanor driving under the influence.

In a breath test Officer Marie Gochnour registered blood-alcohol levels of .234 percent and .247 percent, above the state's legal limit of .08 percent. Officer Sean Moore's breath sample was .161 and .149.

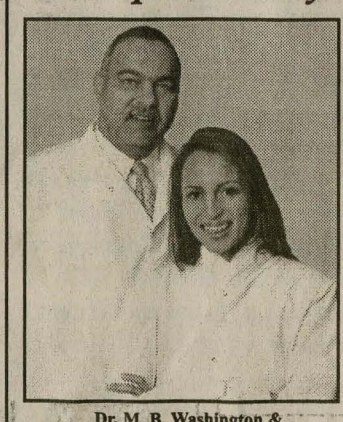
They were arrested Dec. 17, 2012 after a 911 caller reported a vehicle/pole collision near First Avenue South and South Lander Street. The two were found in Gochnour's vehicle.

The officers have been reassigned to desk duty, Gochnour from patrol and Moore from the K9 unit.

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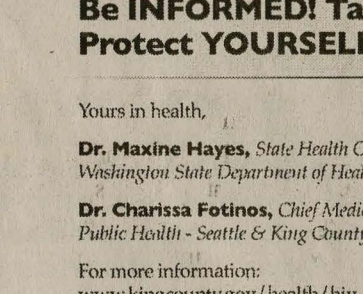
Dr. Maxine Hayes, *State Health Officer, Washington State Department of Health*

Dr. Charissa Fotinos, *Chief Medical Officer, Public Health - Seattle & King County*

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Sunday

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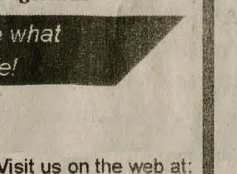


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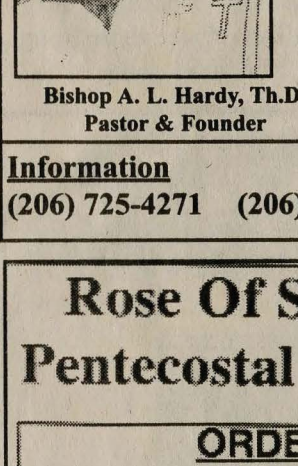
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Greater Mount Baker Missionary Baptist Church 63rd Church Anniversary Celebration

Greater Mount Baker Missionary Baptist Church will host its 63rd church anniversary. The services will convene on Wed., March 13, 7:00 p.m. Guest speakers include Greater New Bethel Pastor Dana McClendon on Thursday, March 14, New Direction Pastor Matthew Thornton on Friday, March 15, Emerald City Seventh Day Adventist Church Pastor Eugene Lewis. The celebration will conclude on Sunday March 17 at 3:00 p.m with Peoples Institutional pastor George Davenport.

Greater Mount Baker is located at 2425 So. Jackson St. in Seattle. Kenneth J. Ransfer Sr. is pastor.

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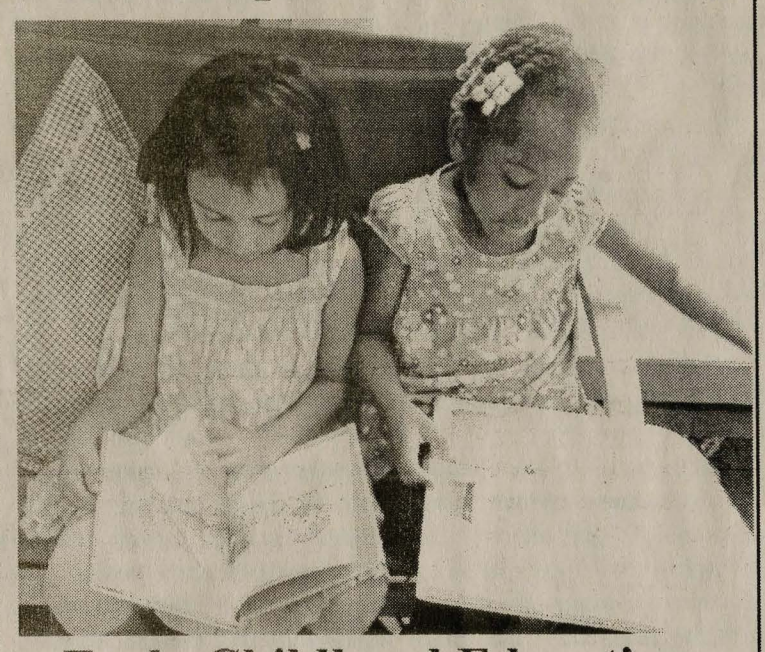
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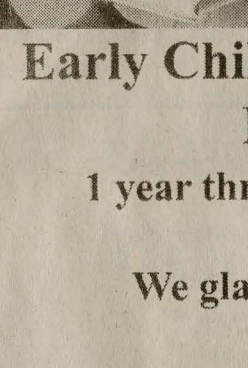
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Morning Worship	10:30AM
Evening Worship	6:00 PM

Wednesday

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The Seattle Medium accepts church announcements on a weekly basis. All announcements are due two weeks prior to your event. All announcements on this page are broadcast on The Heaven Bound Train every Sunday on KZIZ 1560 AM, KRIZ 1420 AM and KYIZ 1620 AM.

All church announcements heard on the radio must originate in The Seattle Medium. All fees for church announcements must be submitted prior to them being published.

For more information contact the Church Editor, Joan Owens at 206-323-3070.

Unemployment May Worsen For Black Workers



By Freddie Allen
NNPA Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – The economy beat expectations in February by adding 236,000 jobs nearly, doubling 119,000 jobs created in January, according to the Labor Department. Overall, the unemployment rate dipped to 7.7 percent, but the Black jobless rate stalled at 13.8 percent, unchanged since January.

According to some labor experts, the numbers could signal a tough year ahead, especially if Washington lawmakers continue down the sequester path of cut-first and ask questions later.

Including February's report, the three-month average Black unemployment rate was 13.9 percent, more than twice the rate of White workers who posted a 6.9 percent three-month average jobless rate.

The unemployment rate for Black men at least 20 years old dropped from 13.4 percent to 12.9 percent in February and for White men looking for work, the number decreased from 6.6 percent to 6.3 percent.

For White women, the jobless rate also decreased from 6.4 percent to 6.0 percent. But Black women continued to lose ground posting 12.5 percent unemployment rate, an increase from the 12.3 percent the previous month. That represents the highest unemployment rate for Black women since October 2012.

"We're having a very weak recovery. We are creating jobs, but we're not creating jobs at a strong enough pace to dramatically decrease the unemployment rate," said Algernon Austin, director of the Race, Ethnicity, and the Economy program at the Economic Policy Institute. "That's why we need more stimulus activity not budget cutting at this time,

Even though the increase in the number of jobs added was a welcomed surprise, economists remained cautiously optimistic about the latest jobs report as the effects of the "never-gonna-happen" deep and punishing budget cuts, known as sequestration, threaten job growth.

"The only concern would be what happens over the next few months, because of the sequester," said Steven Pitts, an economist at the Labor Center at University of California at Berkeley, Calif.

The sequester and a number of measures planned by Congress and the president, could erase more than 700,000 jobs from the books, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Pitts said that sequestration and other policies designed to reduce the deficit will cause contraction in the economy and slow down any type of improvement.

Instead, Pitts said that, lawmakers should focus on targeted job programs for Blacks and addressing discrimination in hiring practices that often contribute to the 2 to 1 unemployment gap between Black workers and White workers.

In a recent brief for the Economic Policy Institute, a non-partisan think tank focused on fiscal issues affecting low- and middle-income earners, Austin wrote: "Unemployment projections show essentially no improvement from the high levels that prevailed at the end of 2012. However, this prognosis may prove overly optimistic, as poor policy choices by Congress could easily worsen the economic outlook."

Rep. Marcia Fudge [D-Ohio], chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, echoed those concerns.

"With sequestration expected to further reduce public sector jobs where African Americans are heavily concentrated, and with significant cuts to unemployment benefits, workforce development, housing and health and human services programs, minorities and struggling communities will bear the burden of reversal to any progress in the making."

The public sector shed 10,000 jobs in February and 21,000 jobs in January averaging a loss of 12,000 every month over the past three months.

Sequestration is just going to make that worst, said Austin.

Most of the losses in the public sector happened at the state and local level and Austin said that the conversation around sequestration has shown people how much we need food inspectors, air traffic controllers, and teachers.

In 2011, Black workers accounted for 20 percent of the public sector workforce.

"An important part of having a healthy economy is having a public sector," said Austin. "We should be worried for Black workers, because of the hit to the public sector and because of the weak job growth overall."

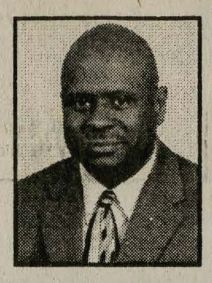
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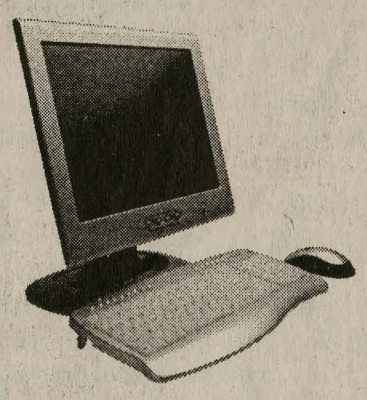


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McGinn, City Council Create Economic Development Commission

On Monday, Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn and Council President Sally J. Clark officially announced the formation of the Economic Development Commission (the Commission) to examine Seattle's ability to compete in the global economy of the 21st century.

"Since I launched the Seattle Jobs Plan in 2010, we've been hearing from the people of Seattle who are building our recovery that they need responsive city government, a supportive regulatory environment, investments in infrastructure, and skilled workers," said Mayor Mike McGinn. "I'm looking forward to working with the Commission and the insights and ideas that they will bring to continue to build an innovative economy that is sustainable, that enhances our quality of life, and that helps more people share in our prosperity."

The Commission is comprised of 15 members, and all commissioners serve a one-year term. Members of the Commission represent a cross section of business, industry and higher education to advise the Mayor and City Council on the development of plans, policies, regulations, and strategies that have substantial impact on creating and maintaining an innovative economy that is resilient, sustainable, and equitable.

"We live in an amazing place with a startling number of innovators and great talent, and we can't take any of it for granted," said Sally J. Clark, Council President and chair of the Council's Committee on Economic Resiliency and Regional Relations. "This Commission will help us focus the City's role in supporting innovation and talent for shared prosperity."

"Community leaders initiated the idea to create an economic development commission in 2011 during a series of Council-led forums," said Councilmember Richard Conlin. "The

Commission will greatly assist the City in recommending policy priorities and actions that implement the City's key principles for economic development; quality of life, hospitable and responsive business climate, resilient and sustainable local economy, collaboration and civic leadership, educated workforce, and adaptive strategies."

The ultimate goal of the Commission is to help the City of Seattle develop and advance a vision for Seattle's economic development that nurtures a policy and regulatory environment that encourages innovation and supports business formation and growth, retention, and expansion.

"The University of Washington is deeply interested in training our students to meet and to take advantage of the challenges and opportunities of the future. At the same time, we are fully committed to moving the incredible research done at the University into the market and into our communities where it can improve lives," said Michael Young, president, University of Washington. "For the University to maintain its capacity as an engine for economic stimulation and growth, we need the right environment and partners. The City of Seattle's Economic Development Commission can support just such an ecosystem, and we are very excited to participate."

The Commission will examine existing economic development strategies developed by the city and regional partners, seek additional information if necessary, and examine Seattle's ability to compete in the global economy of the 21st century in terms of innovation, human capital, regulatory process improvement and measuring success.

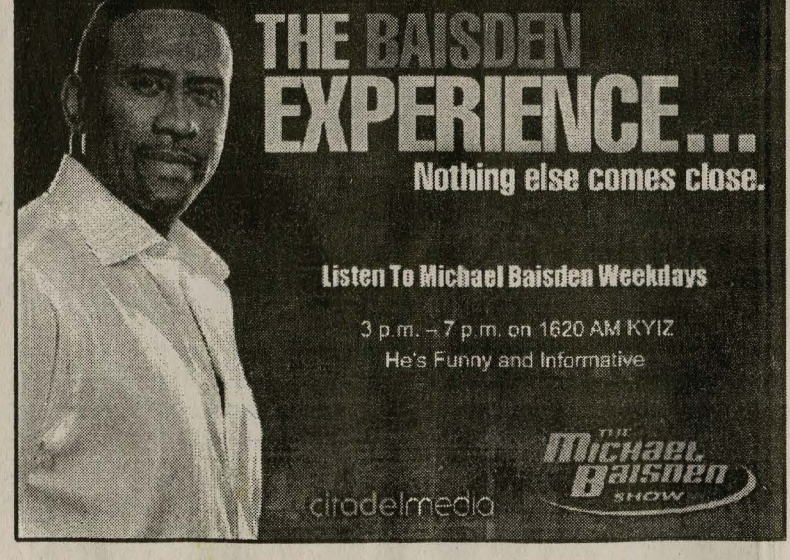
"As an entrepreneur and investor in early-stage companies, I know that innovation takes place over long cycles," said Chris DeVore, partner, Founders' Co-op and TechStars Seattle. "I'm interested in making sure this Commission is thinking about how Seattle can attract the right talent and create the right ecosystem so that the next generation of new, innovative companies will be founded here rather than somewhere else in the world."

The initial charge of the Commission will be to produce and present a report to the Executive and the Council outlining findings and measures that could be implemented to support business innovation and prepare our workforce to meet the needs of our economy. The Commission will be staffed by the City's Office of Economic Development.

"As a small business owner of a 17-person construction management and project controls company, our business priority is to hire locally and provide training for this industry," Tanya Jimale, president and CEO of JTS. "I want to bring my insights and employer experience together with the Commission to bring in more job opportunities and transition people in the community into good, solid jobs with livable wages."

The initial 15 Economic Development Commission members are: Maud Daudon, President & CEO, Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce; Chris DeVore, Partner, Founders' Co-op and TechStars Seattle; David Freiboth, Executive Secretary Treasurer, King County Central Labor Council and Vice President, Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Christine Hanna, Co-Founder/Co-Director, Seattle Good Business Network; Tanya Jimale, President and CEO, JTS; Rob Mohn, President, RAM Columbia, LLC; Alan Nay, Founder, World Famous; Sarah Patterson, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Virginia Mason Medical Center; Michael Rawding, Principal, Deerhorn Advisors; Chris Rivera, President, Washington Biotechnology and Biomedical Association; Brad Tong, Principal, Shiels, Obletz, Johnsen, Inc; Dr. Jill Wakefield, Chancellor, Seattle Community Colleges; Ken Willman, Chief Legal Officer, Russell Investments; Tay Yoshitani, CEO, Port of Seattle; and Michael Young, President, University of Washington.

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Police Commission

Continued From Front Page

City Councilmember; **Marcel Purnell,** Youth Undoing Institutional Racism; **Jennifer Shaw,** ACLU of Washington, deputy director, **Kevin Stuckey,** Seattle Police Department, Officer; **Kip Tokuda,** former State Representative for the 37th Legislative District; **Rev. Harriet Walden,** Co-founder of Mothers for Police Accountability; and **Rev. Aaron Williams,** Mount Zion Baptist Church, Senior Pastor.

The committee will also consider two pieces of legislation to provide resources and staffing to execute the Settlement Agreement. One Bill will create a new Office of the Community Police Commission within the Executive Department at a cost of $362,865. The second Bill will provide funding to staff seven new positions at the Seattle Police Department to implement the Settlement Agreement at a set budget of $2,767,110. The two budget expenditures were accounted for when Council adopted the 2013 budget.

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To download a document, go to our web page at: http://www.kingcounty.gov/procurement. King County encourages minority business enterprise participation. King County does not discriminate on the basis of disability in its programs, services, and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

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King County is requesting Proposals from qualified firms interested in providing construction management services for the Reddington Levee Setback Project.

The Request for Proposals, all addenda and current document holder's list are available on the internet at http://www.kingcounty.gov/procurement. The County will not mail, ship or fax RFPs and addenda.

Interested firms must register with the County at time of download and ensure that a valid contact email address is given. Notification of addenda will be sent to the registered email address. Failure to register will result in the proposer not being notified of any addenda, which may result in rejection of the proposal.

The estimated value of this contract is $500,000 to $750,000. The period of performance is estimated to be approximately nine months.

Contract Title:	**Construction Management Services for the Reddington Levee Setback Project**
Number:	**P00132P13**
Proposals due:	**March 27, 2013**
Time:	**5:00 p.m.**
Pre-proposal Meeting:	**March 11, 2013**
Time:	**2:30 p.m.**
Location:	**401 Fifth Avenue, Chinook Bldg; Room 121; Seattle, WA**

SUMMARY OF WORK: Provide construction management services for the Reddington Levee Setback Project. Refer to project web site for current information: http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/wlr/sections-programs/river-floodplain-section/capital-projects/reddington-levee-setback-and-extension.aspx

SUBCONSULTANT OPPORTUNITIES: Provided for informational purposes only, following are subconsulting opportunities that may be available on this Contract: construction inspection.

SCS UTILIZATION REQUIREMENTS: The Consultant shall ensure that at least 10% of the Contract Price for all Work, as amended, shall be performed by King County Certified SCS Firms over the life of the Contract. Evaluation points for meeting and/or exceeding the SCS utilization requirements will be provided to each proposer responding to this requirement. King County will not evaluate the proposal and will not execute a contract with a Proposer who does not commit to meet at least the SCS utilization requirement as stated above.

QUESTIONS: Questions concerning this solicitation should be directed to **Ruth Williamson,** Contract Specialist at 206-263-9333, ruth.williamson@kingcounty.gov, TTY Relay: 711. The Proposer may be requested to submit the question in writing. No verbal answers by County personnel will be binding on the County.

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NAACP-LDF Leader Calls For Civil Rights Focus On 'New Economy'

By Hazel Trice Edney

(TriceEdney Wire) – America's continuous struggle with economic woes that have disparately impacted African-Americans and other people of color must signal to the civil rights community a need to not only expand its focus – but change its strategy.

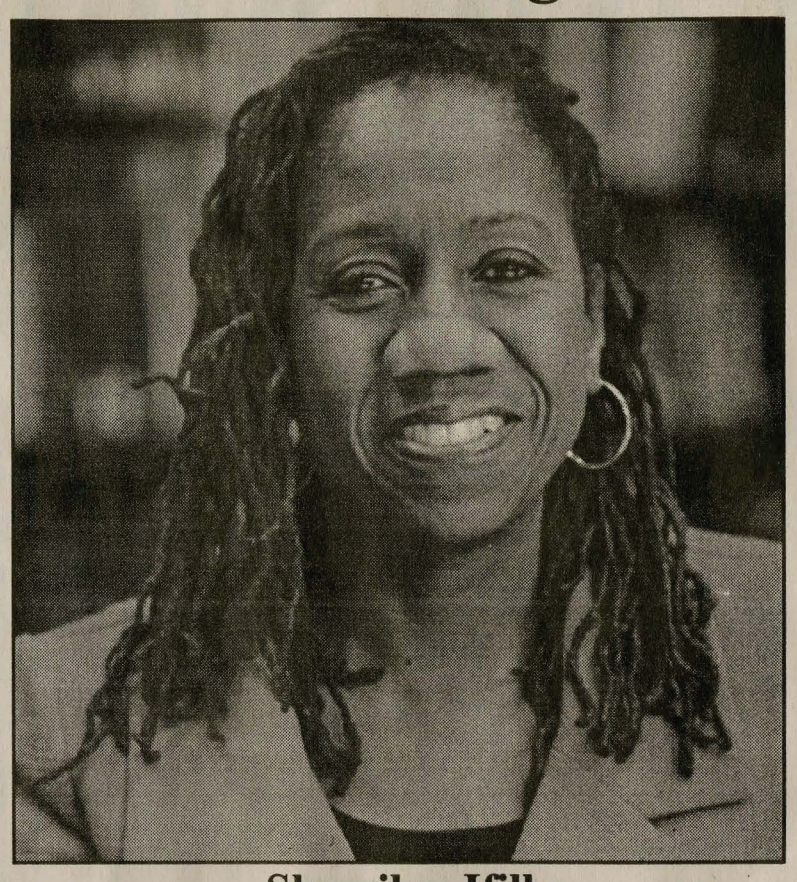
This according to Sherrilyn Ifill, the new director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, who received rousing applause during a welcoming reception late last month.

"And so we have to figure out how we're going to deal with this issue of the new economy. Where do we fall in that? Where do the people that we represent fall in the new credit realm, in the new mortgage lending realm? How are we going to deal with the loss of African-American wealth by the foreclosure crisis that has really decimated the Black middle class?" Ifill grilled an audience of hundreds of lawyers, civil rights activists and leaders of non-profits. "So, we've got to step out and begin to take on those issues for our future and that's my desire as I take up this position at the Legal Defense Fund."

Ifill started at the New York office of the LDF in 1988 as a voting rights lawyer before leaving to teach at the University of Maryland School of Law five years later. After more than 20 years of teaching, legal consulting and continuing to litigate, the veteran lawyer has returned to her first love.

As her civil rights colleagues listened intently during the Downtown D.C. reception, she reminded them of the "Educational Fund" part of the LDF, which too often gets lost in the name. That is one part that strategically must now become a priority, she said.

"Part of our charge is to engage in a conversation with the American public about what's really happening to African-Americans. We love that they're able to see a president and his wife get off Marine One with their kids. Without question, that's a tremendous success, due in some part to LDF. But there is another America - another African-America," she stressed. "And our job is to make sure that the picture of that African-America stays at the forefront of the vision of people in this country. And we only do that by committing to show them that African-America and that Latino America and that Asian America and that elderly America and that poor America and all of the people who are living under the margin and behind the veil of American success and prosperity."



Sherrilyn Ifill

Reaction to her 20-minute talk ranged from energetic applause to hearty chuckles. Perhaps the most humorous line was her use of the Super Bowl to make her point about the need for a greater offense.

"I'm from Baltimore, home of the Super Bowl champions and we're known for our defense … I had to get that in," she said to laughter from the audience. "But the lessons of the Ravens is that although we're known for a great defense we did recognize that we had to lift our offense…We recognized that we had to have a quarter back who could throw, that we had to have people who could block, that we needed a runner that we needed what we call depth on our offense…And I've come back to the Legal Defense Fund in pursuit of depth on our offense."

Though she encouraged her colleagues to "defend the wins" that have been made, such as the then pending arguments in the Shelby vs. Holder voting rights case, she stressed that there must now come a shift in the strategy.

"I'm not interested in just defending what we have already been able to establish. I'm really interested in our pushing ourselves forward to try and realize an America that does not yet exist," she said, continuing the football analogy. "It's the perfect time for me because I feel so powerfully and so passionately about the issue of voting rights; because I believe that we really have to be on the offense on this issue…We have to continue to advance the ball."

The wins have been many, she pointed out. As the seventh in a line of NAACP-LDF director-counsels, she praised the work of her predecessors. In the audience were former director-counsels Ted Shaw and Elaine Jones. Ifill succeeds John Payton who died suddenly last year. Preceding them were founder Thurgood Marshall in 1940, Jack Greenberg and Julius Chambers consecutively.

"They created this world in which we have statutes that theoretically protect us from employment discrimination and protect us in the voting realm and protect us from educational segregation and so forth. And we have to defend those winds and the Supreme Court now has put us in the position where we are pretty regularly defending them. Even after they've been upheld, we're back defending them again. But we cannot allow ourselves to only play a defense game," she said.

She named a string of economics-related issues plaguing Black America that must be studied and must be documented in order to educate America. Those issues include the school to prison pipeline, the impact of the "new economy" on people of color, the housing crisis and safe quality education.

Though she described herself as energetic, she stressed the need for the civil rights community to pull together as a united front because no one person can do it alone.

"The job is enormous, the work is huge and I am mortal," she said. "It only happens when we are linked together and when we're working in partnership. All of the gains of the civil rights legal community have been rendered by us standing close together, communicating with each other, determining what we want and going for it with tenacity. And that's why I'm happy to see so many of you here tonight because it's an expression of your commitment to continue doing that."

Forced Budget Cuts Will Be Extra Harmful To Blacks

By Freddie Allen
NNPA Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – The good news about the sequestration debate is that it reminds people about the vital role government plays in our lives. The bad news is that it will hurt Blacks more than other groups.

"Part of what has been interesting about the conversation about sequestration is the extent to which we're all remembering all the things that the government actually does, all the public services we all rely on every day," said Sharon Parrott, vice president for Budget Policy and Economic Opportunity for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

One of the things that government does is take care of the roads, bridges and highways, but 21st century transportation needs continue to outpace the nation's 20th century infrastructure. Projects that sought to repair and improve those roadways languished in Washington gridlock on Capitol Hill.

According to a report by Building America's Future Education Fund, a bipartisan group that advocates for investments in U.S. infrastructure, in 2010, "Americans wasted 4.8 billion hours sitting in traffic, at a cost of $101 billion and 1.9 billion wasted gallons of fuel."

The recent sequestration budget axe just added to that congestion.

In a recent brief, the Center for American Progress, a Washington D.C. based-independent think tank, detailed how the forced budget cuts will have severe consequences in the Black community. According to report, sequestration threatens Build America Bonds, programs designed to encourage infrastructure investments.

The bond program could lose 7.6 percent of its budget this year, costing thousands of jobs at the state and local level in industries such as construction and public transportation that employ Blacks at higher rates than other groups.

African Americans held 20 percent of the jobs in the public sector in 2011, an area which shed roughly 10,000 jobs in February, according to the latest jobs report from the Labor Department. Sequester cuts would not only affect workers but also companies that stand to lose government contracts, forcing everyone to make tough decisions.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that more than 700,000 jobs would evaporate because of sequestration, forcing many thousands to lean on unemployment insurance benefits.

Even as more Americans lean on unemployment insurance benefits to scrape by, those benefits will also fall under the clumsy sequester axe some experts say by nearly 10 percent.

The unemployment rate for Blacks was 13.8 percent in February and 38 percent have been out of work for more than a year.

"If you've been out of work for six or seven months and you're trying to keep your family together, you're trying not to lose your home and you're trying to put food on the table and you're getting like $1,200 a month, losing a $100 in unemployment benefits is something that you're going to feel," said Parrott during a recent panel discussion on effects of sequestration at the Center for American Progress Washington office.

Young Blacks looking for work have it even worst, as many of the programs that they depend on will lose funding and therefore limiting their options. The forced cuts will also make it harder for young Blacks that use job training programs such as YouthBuild and JobCorps to climb out of poverty.

Black aged 16-19 already suffer with unemployment rates that topped 40 percent over the past three months compared to 21.5 percent average jobless rate for White teens over the same period. YouthBuild, a job training program for poor youth, stands to lose one-third of its total budget in 2013 because of sequestration cuts and previous budget cuts. More than half of the young people that turn to YouthBuild are Black. JobCorps could lose $83 million in funding as a result of sequestration.

Life under sequestration won't get much easier for young Blacks who choose college over job training.

According to the Center for American Progress, "Nearly $3 billion would be cut in education alone, including cuts to financial aid for college students and to programs for our most vulnerable youth—English language learners and those attending high-poverty, struggling schools—impacting 9.3 million students."

More than 80 percent of Blacks who graduated during the 2007-2008 academic year, earned degrees and mountains of debt. Sixty-four percent of White students graduated with college debt during the same year.

Even as President Obama touts universal pre-kindergarten programs for improving educational outcomes, the sequestration that he and Congress agreed to undermines the survival of current programs such as Head Start, federal school readiness program for children and pregnant woman. Head Start, created in 1965 to assist poor families with children 5 years old and younger and pregnant women, may lose nearly $1 billion from their budgets.

Almeta Keys, executive director of the Edward C. Mazique Parent Child Center, a Head Start program in Washington, D.C. said that cutting Head Start at the grassroots level would be a catastrophic event for families living in poverty.

"We really can't afford to cut a dollar from Head Start because we are serving the poorest of the poor," said Keys. "You are cutting the people that need the most help. Head Start already knows how to stretch dollars."

Keys said that even with private partnerships, Head Start is still short on funds.

"This is not a luxury," said Keys. "We know that our families need these services so we will try to be as creative as we can to provide the services, but we are telling them to prepare."

Alicia Tolliver, a parent who participated in Head Start feels that pain. Tolliver, who lost her job last year used Head Start's before school and after school programs for her 2-year-old so that she could look for work. Last year, Tolliver said, her Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners came from Head Starts supplemental programs. This year, without their help, she doesn't know what she will do.

"They are already at maximum capacity, if you cut the hours, you have to cut the children – it's a package deal," said Tolliver. "Once those things happen, what am I going to do?"

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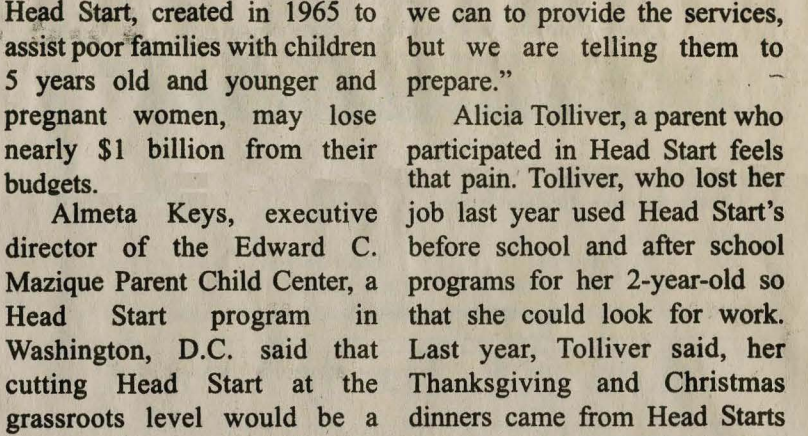
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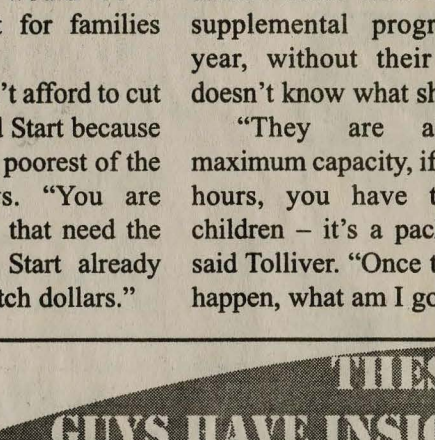
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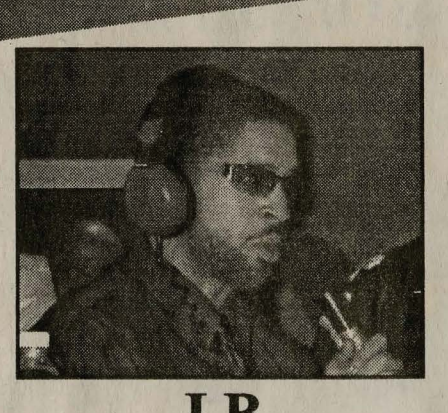
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EDITORIALS • COMMENTS • OPINIONS

Black Unemployment Has Not Improved

By Julianne Malveaux
NNPA Columnist

When unemployment numbers were released on Friday, commentators reacted joyfully. Alan Krueger, who heads the White House Council of Economic Advisors, described the creation of 247,000 jobs as a victory because the predictions were that the economy would only generate 170,000 jobs. Unemployment rates went down to 7.7 percent, while predictions were that they would drop to 7.8 percent. Some might call this good news, but many might wonder who is affected by this good news.

A deeper examination of the unemployment data shows the disappointing reality that African American unemployment rates remained level, at 13.8 percent. Meanwhile, White unemployment rates fell to 6.8 percent and the rate for White men dropped to 6.3 percent. The racial disparities in unemployment rates are not new, but it is hypocritical to celebrate a drop in White unemployment rages, without noticing or mentioning the stagnation in Black unemployment rates.

More than new construction jobs were generated last month, but since Black unemployment rates remained level, that suggests that African Americans are not being brought into that industry (if at all) at the same rates that Whites. Implicitly, these data make the case for continued affirmative action, especially in well-paid jobs. In times of economic hardship, those hiring are inclined to look after their own instead of spreading the jobs around. And recent data suggests that African Americans enter the labor market with a shallower rolodex than Whites. Fewer contacts mean fewer job opportunities.

Whose employment situation has improved?

The number of long term unemployed remained level at 4.8 million people who have been unemployed for 37 weeks or more. To be sure, this is a drop from the 39 weeks of a year or so ago. Still, the situation for some of the unemployed has simply not improved. One of the reasons that the unemployment rate dropped is because 130,000 people dropped out of the labor force because they could not find jobs.

Eight million people work part-time for economic reasons. They would take full time work if only they could find it. The number of "marginally attached" workers stands at 2.4 million. If underutilized workers are included, the unemployment rate is 14.3 percent for everyone. If the relationship between underutilization and reported unemployment is the same for African Americans as for Whites, then the real unemployment rate is 25.5 percent, or almost a fourth, for African Americans. That's alarming, yet as I watch televised reports on Black unemployment rates, this is unmentioned.

Black unemployment rates are at more than Depression levels, which ought to be completely unacceptable. It is not. Yet few are paying attention to the plight of the unemployed, underemployed, or out of the labor force Black worker. The White House and others love to talk about all of us being in the same boat. Yet some are hanging onto the board by their fingernails, and others are drowning. And some are struggling to row. Others are riding relatively smoothly through this recession, watching their situation improve.

CEA Chairman Krueger says the data from this employment report suggests that we are well on our way to economic recovery. From my perspective this recovery is neither robust nor inclusive. In order for this recovery to be fully celebrated, every sector of Americans should see their material conditions increase. They've increased for some. What about the others? Where are their advocates?

Too many African American leaders are asleep at the wheel when it comes to the employment situation. Unemployment rates become a line in their speeches, not a lode for their leadership. High unemployment rates explain why so many African Americans, at the economic margins, don't support civil rights organizations. They are asking what's in it for me.

What if huge numbers of unemployed people were mobilized? What if, in their economic misery, some rose up and demanded that Congress and others pay attention to their situation? To watch the situation of Whites improve, while Black unemployment rates remain the same, suggests that the vision of a post-racial society is extremely unrealistic. African American people are bearing a disproportion amount of pain in the current employment situation. Black people are starving, and it seems that no one, not even civil rights advocates, will act on their behalf.

Court Misses White Racial Entitlement

By Rev. Jesse Jackson
TriceEdney Wire

In oral arguments before the Supreme Court on the Voting Rights Act, Justice Antonin Scalia slandered the act as a "racial entitlement," arguing, "whenever a society adopts racial entitlements, it is very difficult to get out of them through the normal political processes." So, the right-wing justice intimated, the conservative "Gang of Five" on the Supreme Court had every right to step in and overrule the 98 senators who voted unanimously to reauthorize the act (including the senators of every state and jurisdiction required to seek pre-clearance of any changes in their voting laws).

The justice proved once more that he is not a neutral arbiter of the Constitution but a right-wing activist with an agenda to enforce. Deference to the popularly elected Congress and president is, apparently, only when they do what Scalia considers to be proper. When they choose to reauthorize a Voting Rights Act that has protected the rights of millions and transformed America's democracy since its passage in 1965, Justice Scalia thinks the court should negate their act, since he somehow considers protection of the right to vote a "racial entitlement."

Scalia's racial taunt has received the scorn it deserves. It makes more sense to apply his reasoning to the real "racial entitlements" that still scar our nation.

For example, a recent study by Brandeis University revealed a stunning increase in the wealth gap between whites and blacks in America. The gap tripled between 1984 and 2009. In 2009, the median wealth (the difference between what you own and what you owe) of a white household was $113,149. The median wealth of a black household was $5,677.

Why the difference? The study found five contributing factors.

First, whites were more likely to be homeowners than blacks, often because their families are more able to help with down payments. Black families who worked for 200 years in slavery and 100 years in segregation had less ability to accumulate wealth.

Second, whites made more income than blacks, even for comparable work.

Third, blacks are twice as likely to be unemployed as whites, and, with less of a family cushion to rely on, more likely to deplete their savings when unemployed.

Fourth, whites are five times more likely to inherit money, and their inheritance averages 10 times as much. Again, this surely is in part a legacy of our scarred history.

Finally, whites are more likely to have a college education than blacks. Blacks are more likely to find advanced training difficult to finance. They are more likely to graduate with debt, and their average debt on graduation is greater.

The wealth gap is, in Scalia's words, a "racial entitlement." Only this entitlement favors whites, not blacks. As Scalia wrote, "whenever a society adopts racial entitlements, it is very difficult to get out of them through the normal political processes." That's why it took a Civil War to end slavery, and to amend the Constitution to guarantee equal protection of the laws. It took the sacrifice of lives and limbs in a civil rights movement to end segregation, and to pass the Voting Rights Act to provide minorities with an equal right to vote. On economic inequality, the promise of 40 acres and a mule for freed slaves was broken. Dr. King marched on Washington to redeem a "canceled check" marked "insufficient funds."

If Scalia is right, "the normal political processes" won't solve this racial entitlement. Nor, for that matter, will the right-wing Gang of Five on the Supreme Court.

The Rich Are Treated Differently

By George E. Curry
NNPA Columnist

F. Scott Fitzgerald got it right when he said the rich are different.

We are witnessing that in the sequester fiasco and we heard it in another form last week when Attorney General Eric H. Holder offered an asinine reason for not prosecuting bankers/gangsters known as banksters.

Testifying before Congress, Holder said, "I am concerned that the size of some of these institutions becomes so large that it does become difficult for us to prosecute them when we are hit with indications that if you do prosecute, if you do bring a criminal charge, it will have a negative impact on the national economy, perhaps even the world economy."

Holder is not the Secretary of Treasury. While he, like all of us, might be concerned about the economy, that's not his area of responsibility. His job as the nation's chief law enforcer is to enforce the law. And that should apply to banksters like it applies to gangsters. But, as we know, the rich and institutions they control are treated differently.

This variation of banks being "too big to fail" is essentially telling us their CEOs are "too big to jail." If banks are too big to fail, we should remind ourselves who allowed them to grow that large. Each time big banks gobbled up smaller ones like ATMs suck in your check deposit, they had to first win approval from the federal government. That is the same federal government that bails them out when they get in trouble and the same federal government that now whines that their CEOs are two big to jail. Try explaining that to a first-time, non-violent drug user who is rotting away behind bars.

Even in clear-cut cases of gangster behavior, there is a double-standard. Take the case of HSBC, which signed a $1.9 billion settlement with the U.S. after CEO Stuart Gulliver acknowledged the bank's failure to catch at least $881 million in drug trafficking money that was laundered through the institution's accounts. Officials admitted their bank had facilitated illicit financial transfers on behalf of rogue nations, including Iran and Libya, as well as Mexican and Colombian drug cartels.

Their punishment? A fine that equaled 11 percent of last year's profits and a promise to do a better job of monitoring their accounts. And they avoided criminal prosecution.

Like other banks, HSBC will continue to benefit from American taxpayers underwriting its deposit insurance.

Senator Elizabeth Warren [D-Mass.] observed, "It has been almost five years since the financial crisis, but the big banks are still too big to fail. That means they are subsidized by about $83 billion a year by American taxpayers and are still not being held fully accountable for breaking the law."

The $83 billion a year Warren referred to represents the amount taxpayers pay in insurance to make sure U.S. bank deposits are guaranteed.

Think about that. Banks are profit making entities yet the public pays their insurance. Does anyone else pay for your homeowner's insurance? Health insurance? Car insurance? So why should the public share in banks' expenses, but not their profits? It is yet another example of the rich and their powerful institutions being different?

Contrast that different treatment with what's happening in our nation's capital.

In the never-ending game of chicken, Republicans are threating yet another budget showdown. They are adamant that whatever comes out of the ongoing sequester and deficit debates, all cuts must come from the spending side, including Medicare and Social Security.

Although President Obama has used strong, protective language in his State of the Union and inauguration speeches, he has a tendency to cave in when negotiating with Republicans – and that has many Democrats worried.

Obama and his advisers have already stated that they are amenable to a "grand bargain" whereby the White House and Republicans will reach an agreement on budget cuts.

So far, 107 of the 200 House Democrats have signed a letter to the president threatening to vote "against any and every cut to Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security benefits – including raising the retirement age or cutting the cost of living adjustments that our constituents earned and need."

In the alternative, they want the grand bargain to "rely on economic growth and more fair revenue-raising policies to solve our fiscal problems." Those policies should include putting an end to subsidies for big businesses and raising the taxes on the wealthiest Americans.

Speaking on CNBC last week, House Speaker John Boehner said, "Listen, we've got a structural spending problem that has to be addressed. The president's sequester is in effect, and it will be in effect until there's an agreement on cuts and reforms that put us on a path to balance the budget over the next 10 years."

But none of those cuts and reforms on the patch to a balanced budget involve touching the banksters or the rich. After all, as well all know, they are different.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of Emerge magazine, is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service (NNPA).

The State Of Equality And Justice In America: The Urgency Of Now Must Be Taken Seriously

By Rev. Dr. C.T. Vivian
TriceEdney Wire

We must take the urgency of now very seriously. Not just because of the pending 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, but because the future of America's people; especially those who have been long oppressed, depends on right now.

Since the beginning of this country, the one thing that has never been fully decided is who will truly determine this nation's future? Will it be America's truly wealthy - the 1 percent who can decide every political and economic move in the richest and mightiest country in the world? And who, with the economic 1 percent of Europe and Asia, could take over every major decision in this global world? Would it be them or would it be "We the people"?

It is clear by studying recent events; coupled with patterns of history, that the democratic principle of "We the people" is constantly endangered by plutocratic mindsets, those who are often controlled by greed and quests for power. Plutocracy, according to Webster, is one, "Government by wealthy people"; two, "A society governed by wealthy people"; or three, "A ruling class whose power is based on their wealth."

I caution that America could succumb to this social mindset - if we do not continue to stand guard using our democratic powers of "We the people" to the fullest. Take the last presidential election, for instance. Mitt Romney, in his derogatory comment about the so-called "47 percent" of people who he claimed "are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims" and who "pay no income tax" - appeared to dismiss nearly half of American voters. He even said, "... and so my job is not to worry about those people. I'll never convince them that they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives."

These derogatory comments appeared to signal a move to exclude people of a certain social status. Moreover, it appeared as a move to keep the concept of "We the people" alive while denying it in practice. What would have or could have happened had he prevailed?

It is important to note that throughout history, struggles for equality and justice in America have continued to move from victory to setback and from setback to victory. In fact, about every 30 to 35 years, there's a new movement in this country. The civil rights movement was the last one. The one before that was the labor movement. Somewhere between 35 and 40 years, there's always a new people's movement. This time, it's the continuation of the civil rights movement, which includes the movement on behalf of the poor.

At the blessed age of 88, I recall the degradation of segregation and Jim Crow. I struggled for justice through the freedom rides and alongside Dr. King. I marched on Washington on August 28, 1963 and I was there to ultimately rejoice at the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 andthe Voting Rights Act of 1965. And then we suddenly found ourselves mourning upon the assassination of my dear friend and brother, Dr. King, in 1968. He was only in Memphis for the cause of the sanitation workers, the poor, the struggling, and the oppressed who were suffering unequal wages and working conditions.

Fast forward, to see America elect and then re-elect its first Black president nearly 50 years later is reason to rejoice. And yet even President Obama's inaugural speech called for honest labor wages that "liberate families from the brink of hardship."

This is a clear reason that we must continue to march to the polls as well as to take up our banners and plead our causes. We must win our battles in the basic old-fashioned way that it has historically worked - with non-violent direct action protests, coupled with the vote. In doing so, our movement will continue to grow.

A newsman once asked Dr. King, "How many members do you have?" When Martin answered, the newsman retorted, "Well that doesn't represent much of Black America". But then Dr. King said something that is so very relevant in the 21st century. He said, "We don't operate through membership. We operate knowing that if we're right, people will follow us."

The state of equality and justice in America is a continued struggle for the poor despite all of the strides America has made. The urgency of now is to maintain the power and sanctity of the vote, which has become the greatest power held by the poor. As Dr. King said, if we do what is right, others will follow us. This is the power of "We the people".

The Rev. C.T. Vivian is national president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He was also a close friend, lieutenant and advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.