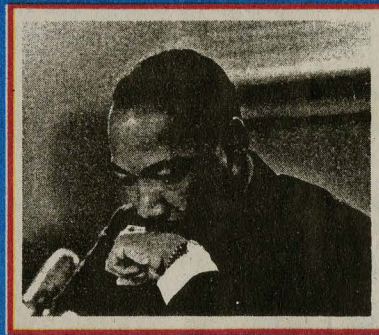


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The Seattle Medium

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Town Hall Meeting Of African American Business Owners To Be Held At Rainier Beach This Sat.

In honor of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King., Jr., the Western Washington Business Association is calling on all African American Business owners in Western Washington to attend a Town Hall Meeting this Sat., Jan. 16 at 10:00 a.m. at the Roberson Performing Arts Center at Rainier Beach High School in Seattle.

The Town Hall Meeting — sponsored by Chris Bennett Enterprises (The Seattle Medium Newspaper and Kris Bennett Broadcasting), The Black Dollar Days Task Force, The Central Area Chamber of Commerce, First Thursdays, Arunga and Associates, Former State Rep. Dawn Mason, and Nat Jackson's Wellness Plus – will focus on training and meaningful employment for African Americans, the easement of redlining through credit scores, and opportunities for Stimulus dollars.

"This Town Hall meeting very well could be the most important one in recent memory," says Chris H. Bennett, chairman of The Seattle Medium Newspaper Group and the Z-Twins radio stations and co-facilitator of the event. "All of Washington benefits from African American economic inclusion, yet stimulus funds sent to Washington State are not reaching our business owners in ways that bring and sustain equity."

"In keeping with the principles of Martin Luther King, we are focused on the ideals he put forth not only for civil rights but he gave his life also for "silver rights," added Bennett.

According to organizers, Chris Gregoire and the Democrat led Legislature, Regional and Local Elected Officials have all been asked to attend. Many African Americans elected officials have already confirmed their attendance, including: State Sen. Rosa Franklin (D-Tacoma) State Rep. Eric Pettigrew (D- Seattle) Martin Luther King County Councilmember Larry Gossett, Seattle City Councilmember Bruce Harrell, Tacoma Mayor Marilyn Strickland, Tacoma City Councilmember Victoria Woodards, Tukwila City Councilmember Joe Duffy, and Port of Seattle Commissioner Robert Holland.

"We need to know how Federal Stimulus funds are being disbursed in ways that bring economic recovery to African American businesses and families," said Dawn Mason, co-facilitator of the event. "And we need to know how our state officials, at all levels, are holding financial institutions in receipt of TARP funds accountable to our community."

The Western Washington African American Business Association is formed and exists for the purpose of this common interest, during these challenging times.

"All African-American community members are welcome to attend," said Bennett. However, we need as many business owners as possible to stand united with us as we address these concerns with our elected officials.

"This is about the economic well-being and preservation of the Africa American Community, period," concluded Bennett.

Senator Rosa Franklin and Representative Eric Pettigrew are co-chairs of the event.

African-American Civil War Museum Expanding To Unveil More History

By Pharoh Martin
NNPA Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Every year, an estimated 100,000 people pour into Washington, DC and make their way to see the striking "Spirit of Freedom" sculpture and the etched names of over 209,000 African-Americans who served in the U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War. And yet, the associated museum where tourists learn about the story of how these heroic souls turned the tide of the war is the size of a very small one bedroom apartment.

"It's not so much that we don't have much on display," said Dr. Frank Smith, founder and director of the African American Civil War Memorial at 1200 U Street. "It's that we have such a small space that they can't enjoy it the way they would like it."

With only 700 square feet, Smith needs more room. And he's finally getting it. The former D. C. city councilman plans to relocate the museum to a bigger building in September, using a $5 million dollar grant he has been awarded from the District of Columbia city government. The foundation that oversees the museum aims to relocate into the city-owned Archibald Grimke Building, which has 2,500 square feet of potential display space and is directly adjacent to the memorial statue in Washington's historic Shaw neighborhood.



Former D.C. Councilman Frank Smith shows artifacts that reveal truths about the service of African-American soldiers during the Civil War. *NNPA Photo.*

The proposed site gives Smith the ability to expand exhibits and programs as well as take advantage of modern presentation technology such as touch screens and high-end audio-visual equipment. The museum currently has only 700 square feet of display space, which is only enough room to hold 10 percent of the museum's elaborate collection of Civil War and Antebellum-related artifacts, documents, letters, photos and other historic keepsakes. When a bus load of students come to visit the museum is unable to accommodate everybody, some are forced to wait outside.

The memorial, museum and namesake Metro subway station anchors the historic U Street corridor, Washington's longtime epicenter of Black arts and culture. P.B.S. Pinchback, the most well-known Black soldier to fight in the Civil War, went on to live an affluent life as a brief stint in Louisiana as America's first Black governor and then as a philanthropist in Washington where he earned the moniker of the "Mayor of U Street".

Ironically, the Shaw neighborhood that U Street is a part of is named after Robert Gould Shaw, the White Civil War general that the all-Black 54th Massachusetts regiment made famous by the 1989 movie, "Glory". The Academy Award-winning war drama ignited public interest in the topic of Blacks in the Civil War.

"Before that movie most people weren't even aware that Black soldiers fought for the Union army," Smith said.

Harry Jones, the museum's curator, is more critical of Glory's glaring historical inaccurate portrayal of dates, events and the regiment itself. For instance, the 54th Massachusetts was depicted as a regiment of uneducated runaways when in reality a majority of the soldiers were free-born men, some who came from independent militias.

"Glory was completely false," Jones said. "In the movie's final battle at Fort Wagner, the producers claimed that the 54th Massachusetts regiment was completely wiped out and that the fort was never taken. That couldn't be further from the truth. The regiment lost ten percent of its men in that battle and the fort was taken seven weeks later."

He calls the movie an advertisement, not a documentary, on the subject. Academia and the general public were operating out of ignorance, he says.

"I tell them the story that's quite different than what they've been hearing," Jones said.

A typical belief is that African-Americans in this time period were agents rather than just victims. But, an 1865 sketch titled "Federal Army Entering Richmond" by White artist Joseph Becker depicts the fall of the Confederate capitol depicts the Union troops entering Richmond - all with dark faces.

The museum uses primary source pictorials to share that experience, a variety of photographs and documents. It also uses first-hand accounts from artists and journalists through artistic renditions and news articles.

A stand out in the collection is an actual 1834 bill of sale for a young Alabama girl. An original Abraham Lincoln-signed Emancipation Proclamation was also displayed at the museum for five days at one point. That document was essential to nationally outlawing slavery.

Blacks who fought in the Civil War have been a long time passion for the 16-year city politician. He first learned about the U.S. Colored Troops four decades ago as a Civil Rights organizer. As a student at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Smith became a leader of Atlanta's student movement and a founding member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, known as SNCC. He dropped out of school his junior year in college so that he could do civil rights activism in Mississippi and Alabama. While registering voters in the Magnolia state, Smith met an NAACP worker whose great-grandfather served in the U.S. Color Troops. That was a revelation for Smith. At that point, Smith had no idea that Blacks fought for the Union army. He spent the next 40 years studying the subject intensely and collecting Civil War-related memorabilia with the idea that a museum would come along one day.

The Georgia native made his mark on the Civil Rights movement until 1968 when he moved to the Nation's Capitol to become a researcher on education and planning issues. His work led him into community politics where he served on his neighborhood advisory board, and later, a term on the city's Board of Education in 1979, which came after a failed run for the City Council. In 1982, Smith again ran and won a seat on City Council. He remained a councilman for four consecutive terms. He got his chance to start the museum in the mid-1990s when the Council needed something to compliment U Street's then-proposed subway station.

Today, the African-American Civil War Museum's founder works the phones to get funding to keep the museum's lights on and educating curious patrons about Blacks fighting in the Civil War.

"Most of the tourists we get are young people," Smith said. "They are college and high school students and they knew it took this. War is brutal. But on the other hand, fighting to save your family and fighting to save your community that's something that you can hold on to. Three out of four people listed on that wall were slaves."

The memorial's 9'1/2" bronze statue, "Spirit of Freedom", was sculpted by Ed Hamilton. The award-winning sculptor also designed renowned monuments such as the Amistad Memorial in New Haven, Conn., and Joe Louis Memorial statue in Detroit, Mich. The front side of the statue shows three armed Black Civil War infantry soldiers and a sailor. The back side shows a family seeing a soldier off to war.

The 209,145 names on the memorial's wall come from the official records of the Bureau of US Colored Troops at the National Archives. The names also include 7,200 White officers who commanded Black troops.

"People naturally just associate the major important monuments with the National Mall," Smith said. "People ask," Why isn't this on the Mall?" And we took that into account when we built it. But our job was to put something up here that was valuable enough to be on the Mall but not be on the Mall."

County Council Approves Creation Of Child Care Center In County Facility

On Monday, the King County Council unanimously approved the construction of a child care center in the County's Chinook building. The adopted legislation authorizes the Executive to execute a 20-year covenant with the city of Seattle for dedicated child care space along with authorizing a 20-year sublease with Northwest Center to provide the child care.

The Chinook Building, which opened in 2007, houses Public Health, the Office of the Public Defender, the Department of Community and Human Services, the Office of Information Resource Management, and the Finance Division. During its construction, the County reached an agreement with the city of Seattle that allowed the building to have additional floors without paying added development right costs. The County received a waiver from the city because it agreed to implement certain features that benefit the public. The child care center is the result of that agreement.

"Finding quality childcare can be a daunting task for families in the downtown core," said Councilmember Larry Gossett, the sponsor of the ordinance. "When we voted to build the Chinook Building, we decided that we were going to make space for a childcare facility. Through the partnership of King County, city of Seattle, Northwest Center and the developers, Wright Runstad and Associates, we will make this childcare facility a reality in the very near future."

"When the Council approved building the Chinook building, I advocated for the building to include child care space, and our vote today brings that vision to reality," said Councilmember Larry Phillips. "It will be so beneficial for King County employees and families of all income levels to have access to childcare right in the downtown core. Northwest Center has an excellent reputation and will provide quality care to all children including those with disabilities."

The interior of the child care center will be nearly 7,000 square feet with an additional 2,900 square feet of outdoor play area. It is expected that the facility will be able to provide child care for up to 60 children, and the agreement between the County and the city of Seattle reserves 20 percent of the available slots for low income families.

Northwest Center will operate the facility, serving children from infants (6 weeks) to preschoolers, with and without developmental disabilities. The organization will pay $0 base rent for 20 years, but will be responsible for costs associated with the county's exterior maintenance of the area, such as outside window washing.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Movie Review: The Book Of Eli



Denzel Washington stars in the film The Book of Eli

By Dwight Brown
NNPA Film Critic

(NNPA) - It's the end of the world, as we know it…

Road Warrior, Waterworld, The Postman, The Road, I Am Legend… Post-apocalypse films are a dime a dozen, so what makes The Book of Eli so different? Not much, except an evangelical subplot that is not strong enough to be this film's savior.

To quote the protagonist, Eli (Denzel Washington), "It's been 30 years since the flash." For three decades this sullen, violent anti-hero has been "heading west," with a prized possession in his knapsack. The streets of the U.S. are desolate, except for other survivors/vultures who rape, pillage and search for precious commodities like water.

Whenever roving marauders attack Eli, he defends himself with knives, swords and guns, killing and maiming with a precision that is remarkable – unless you're in a far-fetched movie. A leader of a gang, Carnegie (Gary Oldman), covets the book Eli hoards. He sends his adopted daughter Solara (Mila Kunis) to seduce the interloper, to no avail. Eli's mission is to save his prized bible for a greater good, and he'll fend off the unyielding attacks. Can he survive? Can he save a vestige of humanity?

Gary Whitta, a videogame writer, entertainment journalist and comic book author, has become a screenwriter and nothing in his background has enabled him to imbue this formulaic screenplay with depth of emotion or thought. His characters are cliché, leaving his fairly talented cast with little to work with. Scenes drag and characters have far too much dialogue for a film that is essentially an action/thriller. No back-story explains why Eli has almost super-human fighting skills or why he is so saintly. The script has one unique plotline, as the third act unfolds, the story focuses on the power of religion in developing moralistic societies. But, what should be a very [illegible]tual, inspirational moment, as written and directed, feels trite.

Allen and Albert Hughes, aka The Hughes Brothers, built their reputation at age 20 on their debut film Menace II Society, a daring interpretation of inner-city life that struck a chord. Their follow-up film, Dead Presidents, had equal swagger. Subsequent movies, From Hell (a Jack the Ripper biopic that bombed) and their controversial documentary American Pimp (a one-sided look at the world's second oldest profession) were almost career buzz killers. Their direction on "Eli," though not a total embarrassment, does not enhance their reputation. Elongated, unimaginatively staged scenes crash into each other. Action sequences lack innovation. Bullets fly through the air like rain, but Eli is rarely hit, while his shots find their targets; is that because the villains have bad depth of perception, or what?Denzel Washington is apt at making molehill characters into mountains, but his enigmatic portrayal of Eli is two-dimensional; he's either ultra violent or devotedly religious with few shades in-between. Gary Oldman, a consummate actor who can make an antagonist a fiendish, memorable villain (Hannibal), never gets under the skin of his Carnegie character. Mila Kunis, as the twentsomething waif who tags along with Eli, seems aimless, like Lindsay Lohan set adrift at a nightclub.

Don Burgess' cinematography never shines. Production designer Gae Buckley gives the film a dull taupe look. Sharen Davis, who did wonders with the costumes for Ray and Dreamgirls, is in part sabotaged by the work of the make-up artist and hairstylist. Dingy "Urban Outfitter" clothes, smudged faces and matted hair make the supporting cast look like fugitives from the Michael Jackson video Thriller who were recruited from Hollywood and Vine.

January is regarded as the graveyard month for bad-to-mediocre films that could not compete with summer blockbusters or the autumn line-up of Oscar® contenders. The Book of Eli, compared to other post-apocalypse films, is not necessarily D.O.A., but it's got one foot in the grave.

Rating: * ½

Halle Berry And Boyfriend Bypass Airport Line

MONTREAL (AP) - Canadian police said Friday that it was wrong for one of their officers to whisk Halle Berry, her model boyfriend and baby through airport security at Montreal's Trudeau airport.

A constable at the airport decided to let the couple pass a long line after a spur-of-the-moment request on Monday by Gabriel Aubry, a Quebec model who is Berry's boyfriend and father of her 22-month-old daughter, Nahla.

``The (boyfriend) of Ms. Berry asked if they could go faster through the line because they were late and they had the baby,'' said Insp. Jimmy Cacchione, who heads the 36-member unit that patrols the Montreal airport.

``The officer took the personal initiative to allow them to go through the line faster, but that's not something the Montreal police supports.''

An embarrassed Montreal police force issued a directive to its officers Friday, urging them to avoid a repeat of the episode.

The officer involved will not be reprimanded and the police airport unit will institute stricter rules for the future, Cacchione added.

Berry's agent Toni Howard was not immediately available for comment.

Journalist Marieve Paradis said she spotted the actress and her family bypassing a lengthy security lineup while other passengers waited for hours to get to U.S. Customs.

``It shocked me that we were waiting in line, and there were other babies and other children,'' Paradis said from Los Angeles, where she lives.

``Monday was chaotic at the airport, people were anxious and people were nervous and everyone was scared to miss their flights.''

Paradis, who spotted Berry again seated in the front row of the same Los Angeles-bound flight she was on, questioned in her blog Friday why a police escort would have been necessary for the power couple, who own a home north of Montreal.

``I'm not sure people from Montreal are very happy to learn that their money from their taxes is used for escorting celebrities.''

Paradis said she barely made the morning flight herself after arriving three and a half hours ahead of departure as a result of heightened security checks at airports across the globe since a foiled terror attack on Christmas Day.

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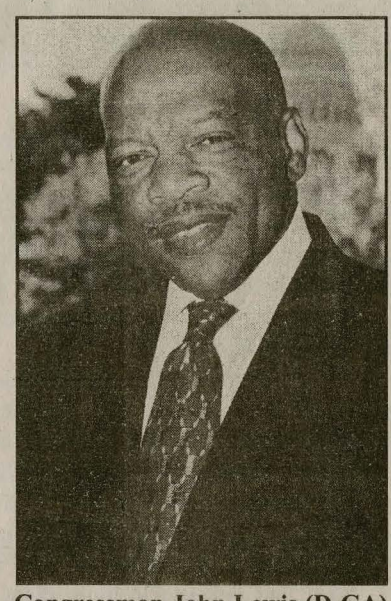
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Seattle Area Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebrations

Congressman John Lewis To Keynote King County Annual MLK Celebration

Congressman John Lewis (D-GA) will be the keynote speaker for the 23rd Annual King County Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration to be held on Thurs., Jan. 14 from 12 Noon to 1:00 p.m. at the Paramount Theatre - 911 Pine Street in Seattle.


Congressman John Lewis (D-GA)

Often called "one of the most courageous persons the civil rights movement ever produced," John Lewis has dedicated his life to protecting human rights, securing civil liberties, and building what he calls the "Beloved Community" in America.

The event will also feature music by Quinton I. Morris. Morris, the founder of the Young Eight String Quartet, has performed solo and chamber music in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East.

This event is free and open to the public, no RSVP's are required.

For more information, please contact Kamilah Brown, Legislative Aide to King County Councilmember Larry Gossett, at (206) 296-1002 or kamilah.brown@kingcounty.gov

The Millionair Club Charity Honors Diversity on Martin Luther King Jr. Day

On Mon., Jan. 18 The Millionair Club Charity, a non-profit committed to serving Seattle's working homeless community, will host its first annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration from 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. at The Millionair Club Charity dining room, 2515 Western Ave. in Seattle.

The event will be a celebration of Dr. King's dedication toward a society where those that were often disenfranchised and isolated from the mainstream had the opportunity to achieve their dreams and live a dignified existence.

The event will feature members of the Seattle community, including guest speaker Congressman Jim McDermott and other local dignitaries, West African storytelling dance performance by Ocheami, followed by a buffet-style breakfast sponsored by Schwan's Home Service of Auburn, and keynote address by James D. Bible, President of the Seattle King County NAACP.

Black Business Rally In Olympia

The Community Coalition For Contracts and Jobs (CCCJ), The Truckers Consortium, The Contractors Development and Competitiveness Center (CDCC) and African American business owners are encouraging everyone to participate in a MLK Day Rally on Mon., Jan. 18th at 3:00 p.m. on the north side of the Capitol Building in Olympia.

The purpose of the rally is to bring attention to the under-utilization of Black-owned businesses in the state. Participants will be encouraged to visit their legislators and request that the State of Washington cease the discrimination against Black-owned businesses, the State's Minority Business Utilization Report will be available at Garfield High School during the Seattle MLK Celebration on Monday, Jan. 18.

Carpools will leave Garfield beginning at 2:00 p.m.

For more information, call (206) 353-5770.

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FAMED COMPOSER AND MUSICIAN BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON KEYNOTES 36TH ANNUAL SCC DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. EVENT

Songtalk illustrates 'Singing as the Communal Voice of the Civil Rights Movement' Celebrated composer and musician Bernice Johnson Reagon will keynote the Seattle Community Colleges' 36th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration 12-1:30 pm on Friday, Jan. 15 **at** Mount Zion Baptist Church - 1634 19th Avenue in Seattle.

Dr. Reagon has been a major voice for freedom and justice since the Civil Rights Movement evolved in the 1960s. A student leader in the Albany Movement in Georgia, she was a member of the original Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Freedom singers formed in 1962, and a founding member of the Atlanta-based Harambee Singers in 1966. Music has remained a constant in her life. In 1973, as a graduate student of history at Howard University and vocal director of the DC Black Repertory Theater, she formed the internationally renowned African-American women's a cappella ensemble, *Sweet Honey in the Rock*. She led the group until retirement in early 2004.

Dr. Reagon will present a songtalk, "The Reason I Sing This Song: Singing as the Communal Voice of the Civil Rights Movement," and will respond to questions from schoolchildren at the conclusion of her presentation. Award-winning gospel group 'Royalty," directed by DaNell Daymon, will also perform. Emcee is KIRO-TV news anchor Angela Russell.

The Seattle Community Colleges annual Community Celebration is free and open to the public.

Annual Seattle MLK Celebration To Take Place At Garfield On Jan. 18

For the 27th straight year, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Committee will be sponsoring a special salute to the legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on Mon., Jan. 18 at Garfield High School in Seattle.

The festivities will begin with a series of workshops starting at 9:30 a.m. The workshops will cover issues of great concern to the poor, minorities, workers and other disadvantaged folks living in Seattle and Martin Luther King, Jr. County. At 11:00 a.m., a huge community rally, featuring great speakers and entertainers, will kick off in the Garfield Gymnasium. The celebration will culminate with a massive "People's March" at 12:00 noon with thousands of participants marching in unison from Garfield to the Federal Building in downtown Seattle.

"This year's grand tribute to Dr. King is proving to be one of the best organized affairs ever and thousands of folks from throughout the community have indicated that they plan to participate and I urge all of you to bring family, neighbors and friends and join us for our workshops, rally and march!" said King County Councilman Larry Gossett, Chair of the MLK Jr. Celebration Committee.

"The theme for this year's MLK Birthday Celebration is 'Justice Now! Health Care, Housing, Jobs and Education," added Eddie Rye, Jr., long-time community activist and member of the MLK Organizing committee.

For further information about the 2010 edition of Seattle's birthday salute to Dr. King, please call (206) 296-1002 or (206) 786-2363.



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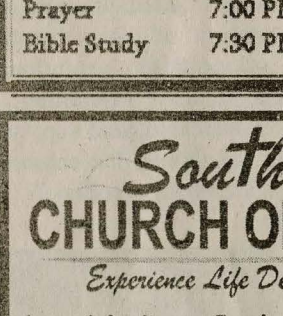
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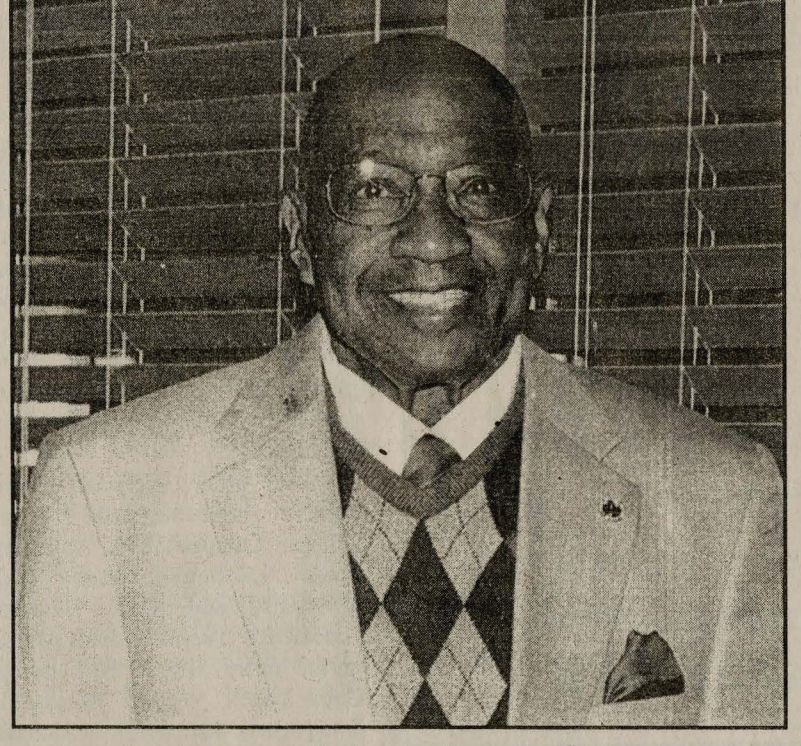


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In Loving Memory Of Joseph Johnson, Jr.



Joseph Johnson, Jr. died on January 12, 2010. Joe was born in St. Louis, MO moving to Seattle in 1950, and graduating from Garfield High School in 1952. Joe joined the U.S. Air Force following graduation, making a career of the military – retiring after 20 years.

Joe was preceded in death by his mother Lilly Johnson; brother R.J. Brown; and sister Fannie Crump.

Left to mourn his memory are his wife Wilma Harris-Johnson; children Jonathan Johnson, Jeffrey Johnson, Denise Gentry and Lucretia Johnson; 11 grandchildren; 8 great-grandchildren; sister Shirley Johnson; nephew Rick Brown; nieces Sherry Johnson and Pamela Johnson; and a host of cousins and friends.

Viewing will be from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Mon., Jan. 18 at Bonney Watson – 1732 Broadway in Seattle. Funeral Services will be held at 11:00 a.m., Tues., Jan. 19 at First A.M.E. Church – 1522 14th Avenue in Seattle.

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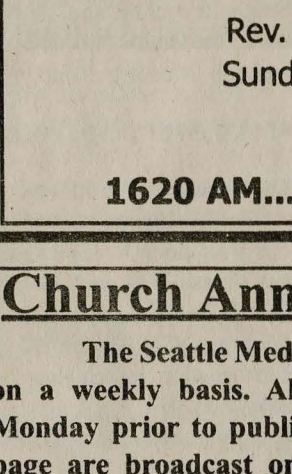
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Church Announcement Policy:

The Seattle Medium accepts church announcements on a weekly basis. All announcements are due by the Monday prior to publication. 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 please contact our business office at 206-323-3070 ext 107.

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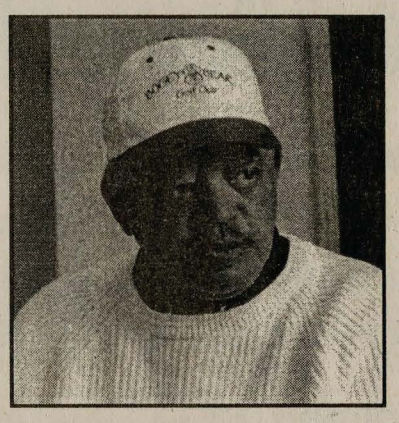
Brother
Thomas R Martin Jr.,
Minister

Schedule of Services
Sunday
Bible Study 9:30AM
Morning Worship 10:30AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Obituary

Colonel Ernest B. Johnson USA (Ret.)



Colonel Ernest B. Johnson, USA (Ret.) 85, of Seattle, passed away on Mon., Jan. 4th, at Harborview Medical Center, surrounded by family.

Devoted husband, and loving father, his family always came first. He will be greatly missed.

He was born in Carteret, New Jersey and grew up in Wilmington, N.C. where he graduated from Williston High School. He married Shirley Robinson on September 5, 1950. He was a graduate of Hampton Institute (now Hampton University), the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and the United States Army Artillery School. He was an all-around athlete at Hampton playing on the football, basketball, swim teams, and was captain of the athlete club's tennis team. He returned to Hampton Institute as a Lieutenant Colonel as its first graduate to serve as a professor of military science.

He served 30 years in the United States Army and retired at the rank of Colonel. He originally left teaching high school to enlist in the Army, rising rapidly through the ranks and receiving a direct commission in 1950. He served in the Korean War as a First Lieutenant in the field artillery, and was attached to the United Nations delegation during the exchange of prisoners at Panmunjom. During his career he held assignments in Washington, Oklahoma, West Germany, New Jersey, Virginia, the Presidio in San Francisco, and Hawaii. He served two tours in Vietnam, the second as a Battalion Commander. His last assignment was a return to Fort Lawton to serve as Post Commander and Senior Military Adviser to the 124th Army Reserve Command. During his career he was awarded several decorations which included the: Legion of Merit, Army Commendation Medal, Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, and the Air Medal.

After his retirement he served veterans and seniors at the City of Seattle. He was Program Coordinator at the Seattle Veterans Action Center (SEAVAC) where he assisted returning Vietnam veterans. In 1983, he became the Director of the Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens where he continued his long career of service.

After his second retirement in 1990 he volunteered at the Central Area Senior Center, pursued his love of golf, and enjoyed 'cruising' the oceans with his wife. He was an active member of Fir State Golf Club, and the Royal Esquire Club. He was also a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity.

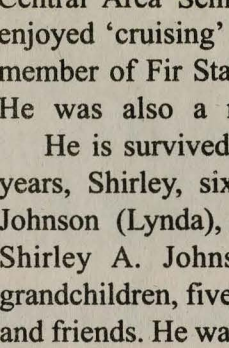
He is survived by his adored wife and best friend for 60 years, Shirley, six adoring children Muriel Gibson, Ernest Johnson (Lynda), Janice Rapier, Angela Hunter (Michael), Shirley A. Johnson, and Vincent Johnson, 16 beloved grandchildren, five great grand children, and a host of relatives and friends. He was preceded to the next life by his mother and step-father, Janie and Johnson Canty.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Hampton University.

A viewing will be held from 2 – 8 p.m. on Thurs., January 21st at Southwest Mortuary. A funeral service will be held on Friday, January 22 at 11 a.m. at Mount Zion Baptist Church. He will be interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

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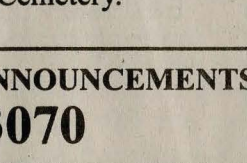
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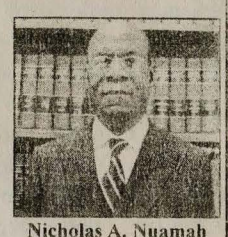
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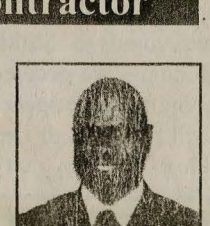
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Has Obama Kept His Promises To Blacks?

By Hazel Trice Edney
NNPA Editor-in-Chief

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - On Nov. 3, 2008, an important telephone conference was held in Black America. That was the day that then candidate Barack Obama, on the eve of his historic election to the presidency, promised African-American leaders and representatives across the nation that if elected, he would never forget that Black people are specifically and disparately hurting from social ills.

"Everyone under the sound of my voice understands the struggles we face. Everyone understands the fierce urgency of now. You all know what's at stake in this election," Obama said on the teleconference, covered by the NNPA News Service.

He mentioned crime, civil rights, education, health and the economy as just a few of the categories in which African-Americans are clearly in worse statistical categories than any other race.

"I mention these issues because this community, our community, the African-American community, during these challenging times, suffers more than most in this country," he said. "Double-digit inflation, double digit unemployment, stagnant wages, our kids are more likely to drop out, more likely to be in jail, more likely to die. We're going to have to do better. And if we continue the momentum we've seen across this country over the last several weeks, we can do better."

But, one year after his historic election – which has often been described as the fulfillment of the "dream" of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., has now President Obama kept his campaign promise to the Black community?

Political observers pondered this question in anticipation of the National King Holiday on Monday and the Jan. 21 anniversary of the historic inauguration. Some say that Obama, who enjoys studying past presidents for their wisdom and leadership styles; especially Abraham Lincoln, should learn lessons from some - especially Lyndon B. Johnson.

"In so far as he has announced a position of public policy which says that he is not taking ethnicity into consideration, this belies the approach of previous presidents like Lyndon Johnson and obviously his relationship to Dr. King, who actually, I think was won over by Dr. King," says political scientist Dr. Ron Walters. Johnson ultimately signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. "[Johnson] was playing with race at first. But, I think he came to believe that he had to do something special for African-Americans. And one suggestion was that it was the pressure that the civil rights movement put on him."

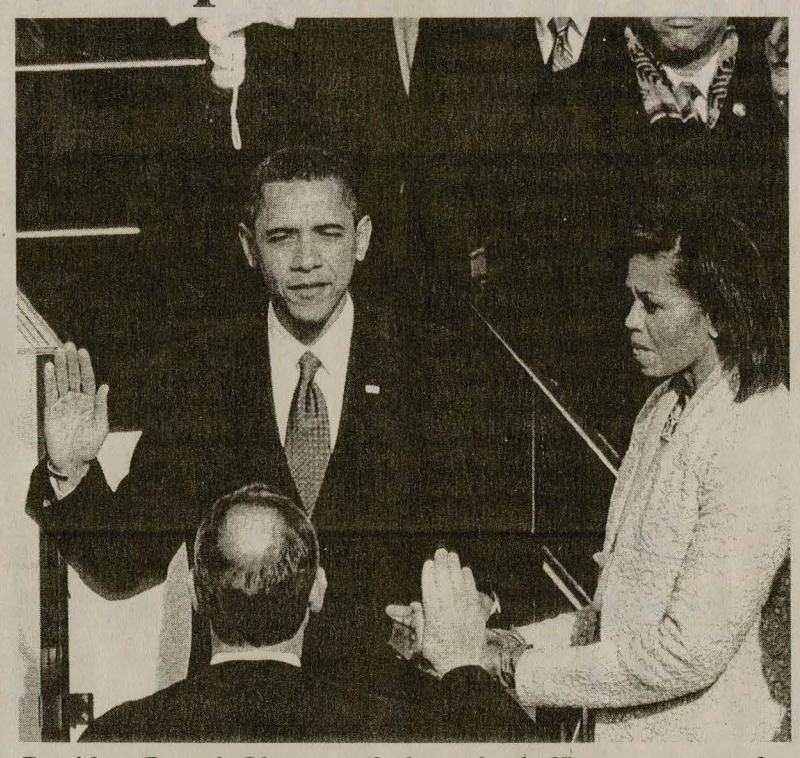
Walters continues, "If you go all the way back to Abraham Lincoln (who is credited for freeing Black slaves with the Emancipation Proclamation) and come all the way forward to Bill Clinton (who established the White House's first race office), presidents have felt that given the differential socio-economic status of Black people, that they had to at least consider doing something special."

Thomas N. Todd agrees. The veteran civil rights lawyer, who was former president of the Chicago chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Operation PUSH, says past presidents have often listened to civil rights leaders who ultimately influenced policy.

During World War II civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph put pressure on President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to include Blacks in an executive order to make sure they got contracts. That was executive order 88-02, he cited. Dr. King put pressure on President Lyndon Johnson to issue executive order 11-246 to make sure that Blacks were protected against employment discrimination.

"Then, although Lyndon B. Johnson was a friend of the Negro, when Dr. King disagreed with him on Vietnam, he challenged him. We need to learn the lessons from history," Todd said. "What Blacks must do now is separate the presidency from the person and separate the institution from the individual. There are only three branches of government and if you concede the presidency without putting pressure on the president, we've lost."

Some prominent Black leaders, including Actor Danny Glover, Ben Jealous of the NAACP, Marc Morial of the National Urban League, the Rev. Jesse Jackson of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, and the Rev. Al Sharpton of the National Action Network, have expressed disappointment at what they view as Obama's lack of attention to issues that are disparately damaging in the Black community – especially joblessness.


President Barack Obama took the oath of office a year ago after crediting Black people for his election. But, some question whether he has kept his promises to African-American voters so far?

The latest example happened on Friday, Jan. 8, the same day that the Bureau of Labor Statics announced its new monthly jobs numbers, showing that the Black unemployment rate had risen from 15.6 percent to 16.2 percent and that the White unemployment rate had fallen from 9.3 percent to 9.0 percent, still under the average rate of 10 percent.

In a televised speech on jobs and clean energy that day, the president briefly paused from his focus on the progressing health care bill and his refocusing on the "war on terror" in order to speak publically about the jobs situation. But, he again failed to mention the fact that while the average unemployment rate held at 10 percent, the Black unemployment rate continued to creep upward to record numbers.

"The jobs numbers that were released by the Labor Department this morning are a reminder that the road to recovery is never straight, and that we have to continue to work every single day to get our economy moving again. For most Americans, and for me, that means jobs. It means whether we are putting people back to work," he said.

But, Walters says he has reviewed executive orders that President Obama has promulgated since he's been in the White House and he does in fact consider race in certain decisions – just not pertaining to Black people.

One executive order mandated that heads of executive agencies consult with Indian tribal governments. Another mandated the increased participation of Asians and Pacific Islanders in federal programs. He also told the Hispanic Caucus that when their unemployment number reached over 10 percent, that was not just a problem for Hispanics, "it was a problem for the nation."

Walters argues, "It seems to me that you can't have it both ways. You can't announce a policy which says in affect that I'm not going to do that and on the other hand write executive orders that in fact does it, which means that he's got a problem with us."

Looking at the depth of issues in the Black community, Walters says he would not have expected major change so soon, "but at least I would have wanted a president who would make sure that his statements are moving in that direction."

Others feel that it is much too soon in Obama's presidency to make such judgments. "We cannot rush to judgment," says Gary Flowers, executive director and CEO of the Black Leadership Forum, a loose knit coalition of 32 major Black organizations which meets with Obama administration officials every month.

But, Flowers, who was on that Nov. 3 teleconference, warns that African-Americans must and will wield their political savvy if the president does not follow through with his promises.

"We are early in the administration. Yet, Black people are among the most sophisticated voters in American History as evident from the 1960s to the presence. Democracy percolates up. Therefore, people must hold politicians accountable to their promises as a matter of civic engagement."

On that Nov. 3 teleconference, Obama was clearly hat-in-hand in front of the Black community, which he credited for having brought him through the Democratic nomination and to the threshold of the historic election.

"Our campaign is alive and thriving ... And mainly it's because of an energized African-American community. You have done this," he said.

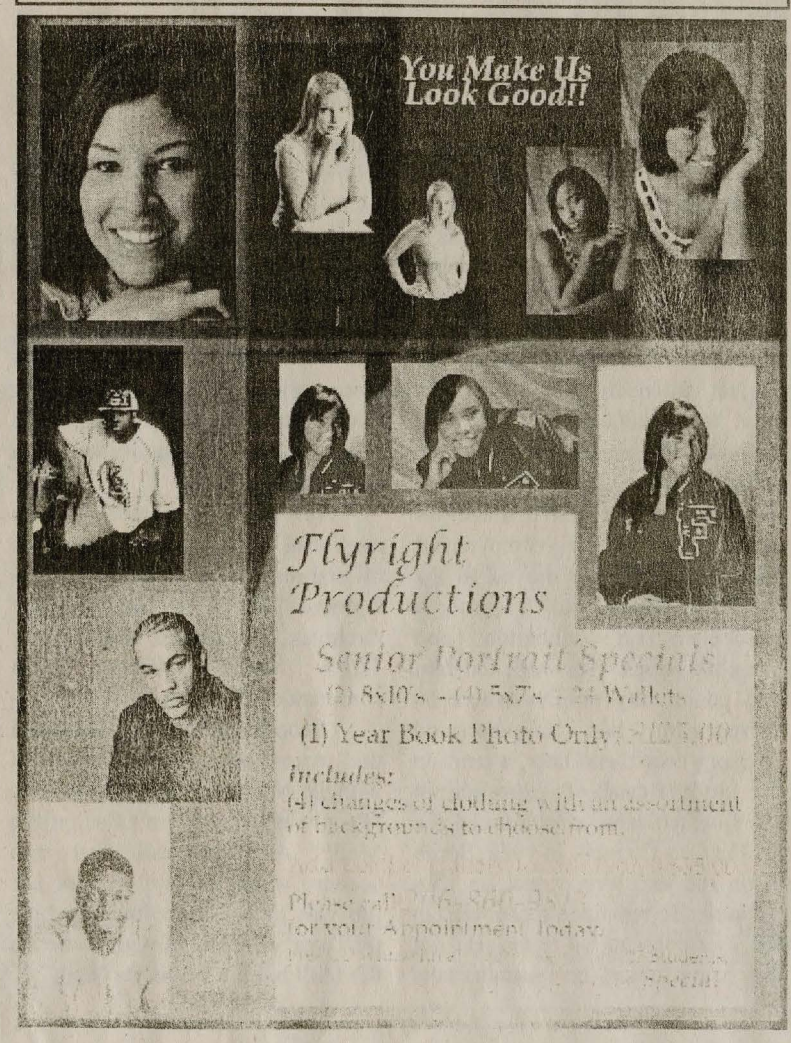
Now, they can only hope that he will keep faith with his promises for change:

"I'm convinced that not only are we going to change this country, but we're going to change this community," he said on the phone that day. "We're going to change our sons, our daughters, our grandchildren, how they look at themselves. We're going to transform barriers in the world. We're going to change the hearts and minds of people around the world. That's a powerful thing. That's more powerful than any policy out there and any governmental program."

THE SEATTLE MEDIUM (ISSN 746-5394) is published weekly on Wednesday for $34.00 per year by Tiloben Publishing Company, Inc., 2600 South Jackson Street, Seattle, WA 98144. Periodicals postage paid at Seattle, WA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: THE SEATTLE MEDIUM, 2600 South Jackson Street, Seattle, WA 98144.

Chris B. Bennett & Joan Owens, Co-Publishers

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Federal Appeals Court Rules Convicted Felons Can Vote In Washington State

(NNPA) - The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals last week held that Washington State's law denying the vote to people with felony convictions is racially discriminatory and violates the Voting Rights Act (VRA).

"This landmark ruling recognizes that racial discrimination in Washington's criminal justice system has infected the State's political process," said John Payton, LDF director-counsel in a statement "The result is that Black, Latino and Native America persons convicted of felonies in Washington are disproportionately denied the right to vote."

The Court found "compelling" evidence that "in the total population of potential 'felons' . . . minorities are more likely than Whites to be searched, arrested, detained, and ultimately prosecuted. If those decision points are infected with racial bias, resulting in some people becoming felons not just because they have committed a crime, but because of their race, then that felon status cannot, under section 2 of the VRA, disqualify felons from voting."

The State did not dispute this compelling evidence.

As a result of Washington's law, 24 percent of Black men and 15 percent of the entire Black population in Washington have lost their voting rights because of felony conviction. Collectively, African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans represent only 12 percent of Washington's population, but comprise 36 percent of the State's incarcerated population.

"The evidence showed that the rate at which Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans are convicted of felony offenses and consequently disqualified from voting is not reflective of their actual participation in criminal behavior, said Ryan P. Haygood, Co-Director of LDF's Political Participation Group. "These racial disparities tell a troubling story of minority over-representation in the criminal justice system resulting not from any public safety imperative but rather from discrimination."

Nationally, more than 5.3 million Americans are denied access to the fundamental right that is preservative of all other rights. An estimated 2 million of the disfranchised, roughly 38 percent, are African-Americans. Maine and Vermont permit prisoners to vote by absentee ballot from prison.

Attorney General Rob McKenna and Secretary of State Sam Reed have announced that they will appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. On Tuesday, McKenna's office filed a motion requesting the 9th Circuit stay its decision for 90 days to allow the state time to file its petition

HOROSCOPE (NNPA) JANUARY 14 - 20, 2010

ARIES
This could turn out to be the most argument-filled week you've had for a while. Your feelings could be deeply hurt if you try to force your sense of rightness off on anyone else. Chill. Remember that in the past when people were cantankerous you could find pleasure in nature, or animals. Soul Affirmation: I put my charm to work for me this week.

TAURUS
Your good will and intentions towards others will reap you an inheritance of abundance and wealth. You will be blessed with many good wishes and enjoy them in the company of family and friends. Soul Affirmation: I appear to others what I know myself to be.

GEMINI
Your dignity and composure is a sure asset this week. Be Mr. or Ms. Cool Breeze. In touchy situations you have the ability to maintain a high level of emotional balance and a calm disposition. Use these qualities to the fullest this week. You have the know-how to re-direct negative feelings into a positive solution. Soul Affirmation: Superficiality is often the best route to clarity.

CANCER
Start this week to make a difference for tomorrow. You can determine the prosperity of your future by making difficult decisions in the present. Rearrange your priorities and decide what are the important things to you. Make a list. Write them down and act on it now! Soul Affirmation: As chances come around again. I take advantage of them.

LEO
You are often superb at exercising good judgment and rational decision-making. Yet sometimes you are rash. Flip to the observant side of your mentality this week. You will soon find yourself in a situation where there will be strife if you are. not careful. Soul Affirmation: A cheerful soul should be wrapped in a cheerful package.

VIRGO
Just to prove to yourself once again how lucky you are you should fly into the face of bad predictions. Gamble this week in business, relationships, love -something. Remain truly confident that things will come out in a way that will satisfy you. Soul Affirmation: Change is my middle name.

LIBRA
Move through your social environments and festive occasions this week without stopping even for a little while to listen to rumors. Rumors are often untrue. And for goodness sake believe only good things about friends and your lover. Soul Affirmation: I keep my eyes open for business opportunities this week.

SCORPIO
Keep focused. Your energies are likely to be spread out this week. Your attention is likely to be pulled in many directions. Let yourself be seduced by the things that interest you most. Concentrate on your affairs. Others need you, but they can wait. Soul Affirmation: I find a source of strength in someone I love.

SAGITTARIUS
Being stubborn won't get the job done. Work with others so they can work for you. Your ideas are not always the best ideas, so don't push them too hard this week. You might find yourself in an awkward position with no allies. Give in to your emotional needs and don't be afraid to let you guard down. Soul Affirmation: I let go and let the spirit take control.

CAPRICORN
Your self-confidence is making you glow all over! People are attracted to your outlook this week, and you may be deluged with offers. Some may not be sincere, but trust your fabulous instincts and you'll pick and choose what's real for you. Soul Affirmation: Clinging to the old will inhibit my growth this week.

AQUARIUS
Find motivation within yourself to complete a task that has been hanging around too long. You will want to play later in the week, and you'll feel happier then with a clear mind. Remember that you're the boss of your emotions. Soul Affirmation: My imagination is the source of my happiness.

PISCES
This week will bring a tendency to dwell on a past betrayal. Your feelings of suspicion are well founded. However, do not personalize it. Work against the harmful act but not against the person who committed it. Soul Affirmation: I am what I consistently do.

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ITB NO. 1011-10-MJM
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ITB NO. 1010-10-PLR
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OPENS: 1/21/2010
JUNCTION BOXES, ELECTRICAL AND WATE

RFQ NO. 1001-10-RLE
OPENS: 1/28/2010
WORK ORDER-BASED REAL ESTATE APPRAISAL/CONSULTING SERVICES FOR TRANSIT AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

RFP NO. 1003-10-RLD
OPENS: 2/25/2010
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Pre-bid Conference: A conference to discuss questions related to this ITB shall be held Wednesday, January 13, 2010 at 10:00 am, at King County Transit South Facilities, 11911 E. Marginal Way S, Bldg C, Tukwila, WA 98104.

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EDITORIALS • COMMENTS • OPINIONS

SCLC Tarnishes Dr. King's Image

By George E. Curry
NNPA Columnist

On Tuesday, the day after the nation officially celebrates the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., suspended Southern Christian Leadership Conference Board Chair Raleigh Trammell of Dayton, Ohio and Treasurer Spiver Gordon, a resident of Eutaw, Ala., are scheduled to appear in an Atlanta court to contest their dismissals amid allegations that they directly benefited from a secret $500,000 board account.

To the public, SCLC, co-founded by Dr. King, has been on the rise after almost going out of business in 2004. Charles Steele, Jr., one of my childhood friends from Tuscaloosa, Ala., brought the organization back from the brink of extinction as president and CEO, raising $8 million during his tenure from 2004 to 2009.

Approximately $3.3 million of that amount was used to build a new SCLC headquarters on historic Auburn Avenue. Even civil rights icon Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth – who once referenced SCLC by saying, "Only God can give life to the dead" – acknowledged the civil rights group had returned from the dead under the leadership of Steele, now an Atlanta businessman.

While the public perception of SCLC was that it had finally rebounded, Trammell was busy getting the board to revise the organization's bylaws, shifting many of the powers traditionally held by the president to him. Dexter M. Wimbish, the general counsel, was directed to report to Trammell instead of President Steele. Against the counsel of his closest advisers, Steele went along with the power shift, arguing that his personal friendship with Trammell would still allow him to function effectively.

That Trammell and Gordon could rise to top board positions should have been an embarrassment within itself. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported on Nov. 10, 2004 that Trammell "went to prison in the 1970s for cheating a county welfare department in Ohio."

Gordon, the SCLC treasurer, lost his city council seat in Alabama after pleading guilty in 1999 to federal vote fraud charges. He admitted that he had asked a person who lived outside of Greene County to fill out an absentee ballot and falsely list a county address. Gordon was sentenced to six months in federal prison, given three years of supervised probation and fined $2,000.

In the rough-and-tumble world of SCLC board politics, Trammell and Gordon have survived because they were among the last people standing.

Their fall from favor is tied to the unaudited secret account, described by one SCLC insider as "a slush fund." Approximately $500,000 has flowed through the account over the past three years, including about $200,000 said to have been siphoned off from prison ministry program operated by Gordon. Although some SCLC staff members were told that the account, opened in Eutaw, Ala. and supervised by Gordon, was subject to an outside audit, no record of an audit has been uncovered. Also, there is no known record of tax returns ever being filed for the account. Some SCLC board members said they had no knowledge that the secret account existed.

Charles Steele raised questions about the account before he resigned a year ago. Steele feared that contributions to SCLC would dry up if the public ever learned about the secret fund. Once Attorney Wimbish and Executive Director Ron Woods learned that there were no independent controls on the board account and suspected that some SCLC funds may have been embezzled, they felt a responsibility to share their concerns with Interim President Byron C. Clay.

On October 29, the board, which had recently elected a half dozen new members, was made aware of the special fund. On November 13, Trammell and Gordon were removed from their board positions, with the new members casting the critical votes against them.

Even before the vote, efforts were made to get Trammell to quietly step aside. A longtime former assistant, based in Dayton, filed a sexual harassment complaint against him with a state human rights agency. Persons familiar with the complaint say the assistant claims to have sexually-explicit videotapes of Trammell, a married minister. She is also said to be ready to make additional allegations that, if true, could lead to his returning to prison.

Rather than stepping aside, a request for an injunction was filed December 29 in Atlanta seeking to restore Trammell and Gordon to their former positions.

The board infighting continues as Bernice King, the youngest daughter of the late civil rights leader, prepares to take over as the first female president of SCLC. Her oldest brother, Martin Luther King III, served as president from 1997 to 2004, but left after a bitter dispute with the board.

According to several people who serve on the board or staff of SCLC, Trammell said that under his leadership, no woman or another member of the King family would serve as president of the organization. However, the self-styled master politician made a major miscalculation.

As a condition for accepting the job as interim president and CEO of SCLC, Byron Clay requested – and got – about six people added to the board. Trammell campaigned for the election of former Arkansas Court of Appeals Judge Wendell Griffen as president and presumed he had the votes of the new board members recruited by Clay. He presumed wrong. Instead of going with Trammell's candidate, all of them backed King, providing the margin for her 23-15 victory.

If Bernice King is to be successful at SCLC, she'll need to get rid of Trammell, Gordon and those aligned with them for good.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of Emerge magazine and the NNPA News Service, is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach.

Demanding New African-American Consumer-Marketer

By Norm Bond
NNPA Guest Commentary

(NNPA) - The African-American consumer market represents the largest emerging market in the world. With revenues projected to reach $1.2 trillion dollars by 2012 according to the US Census Bureau, this market segment has more retail purchasing power than Mexico, a nation to which many US companies are beating a path.

The segment has richly rewarded many retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers. Indeed the African-American consumer has built entire television networks, established new fashion trends and revolutionized the use of consumer electronic and communication tools from pagers to cell phones. We've "passed the Courvoisier," "put a ring on it" and had "everybody in the club getting' tipsy." We've made the words "bling-bling" part of the popular culture, created a market for overpriced football jerseys ("throwbacks") and made more ways to wear jeans than Levi could have ever imagined. But what have we received in return? I guess we'd better "blame it on the alcohol."

This is why the actions of companies like General Motors are so disturbing today. The notion of Black people driving Cadillacs is part of the lexicon within the African-American culture. The brand has been a status symbol for the aspiration of Black leaders from Baptist preachers, to organization leaders to today's "Ballers" whose whip of choice is the Cadillac Escalade. With such extreme brand loyalty from a segment that over-indexes and contributes 24 percent to the companies' market share, you would expect willingness, even a strong demonstrated desire by the company to reciprocate. In a challenging economic environment why not go to our base? Look to further build a "relationship" and partner in new and more creative ways. Would it be too much to ask for support of the things that are of interest to your loyal consumers including the institutions and media outlets that deliver the messages? Clearly not, however, the research shows just the opposite. GM has taken the loyalty of the African American consumer for granted.

Even in the boom years, the company did not spend a commensurate share of its annual advertising budget with Black-owned media outlets. And now, in tough economic times we have learned of the nearly $3 billion dollars the company spends in annual advertising, it spent an insulting $35 million, about a third of one percent, with Black-owned media. This represents on third of a penny, for every $100 dollars it receives from Black consumers who buy GM vehicles. The company recently received $50 billion in government bail-out monies, tax-payer dollars, many of whom are African-American but the company is still refusing to increase its advertising spend with this core-demographic segment that has been "ride or die" with the GM brands – the African-American consumer.

Some would play "devil's advocate" and say – why should they? Why should a company, for example, that has 95 percent penetration into the African-American consumer market and spend $0 in advertising directed toward this group – support Black-owned media? Surely, their research and consultants will tell them "we can put those dollars to better use elsewhere." Besides, what do they have to lose?

I would argue – they could lose a lot. Particularly if these same African-American consumers start to wake-up, become conscious of their influence, and start to leverage their consumer retail spending power in an effective manner. Definitely, if leaders like Danny Bakewell and the NNPA, are able to use the same medium available to these companies, the Black Press of America and inform their readers of the atrocity of continuing to blindly support companies who don't respect our institutions, our community, nor our Black-owned media outlets. Certainly, if responsible Black elected officials like the Congressional Black Caucus are willing to call to task the senior management of General Motors and demand an accounting for the gross inequities of their faulty marketing and advertising practices, companies that follow these outmoded strategies stand to lose even more than profits and market share.

But can Black consumers toe the line? Recently, John and Maggie Anderson of Chicago answered this question. As an upper middle-class African-American family they decided they were tired of just talking about the inequities many of us see every day. They launched the "Empowerment Experiment" and for an entire year "lived off of Black-owned businesses and professional services." This simple act by one family has grown and sparked renewed interest in the possibilities of creating new solutions by seeking out and supporting Black-owned businesses. Perhaps General Motors should take notice. Some will refuse to sit idly, watch and complain as our businesses, our institutions, and our community continues to deteriorate and we spend billions of consumer retail dollars with companies that don't share our values. Indeed the growth of the Empowerment Experiment is proof positive that a new way of thinking is beginning to take root within the African American Community and from a new vanguard of leaders.

This fresh, new leadership is rooted in the visionary action of Rev. Leon Sullivan, the founder of OIC and developer of the Sullivan Principles which helped end apartheid in South Africa. It's rooted in the commitment to action of Black business owners who realize that a "jobless recovery" means that the African-American community must find ways to generate jobs from within its own base by increasing the number of new businesses that are created. It's rooted in new organization leaders who are building local, regional, national, and global networks using social media, traditional media, and their personal networks to create a new balance of power. This group is moving forward with a firm belief that if the question is – can Black consumers toe the line and crate new mutually beneficial relationships with companies that respect their interests? Then the answer is, "Yes we can!"

Norm Bond is the national president of the National Alliance of Market Developers, Inc. (NAMD) founded in 1953.

Young Black Men Are Precious Too

By Phill Wilson
NNPA Columnist

(NNPA) - My recent Op-Ed piece titled "Precious and a Princess" kicked up a firestorm. Some readers were offended because I compared the lives of some Black women to that of Claireese "Precious" Jones's life in Lee Daniel's film Precious — even though many Black girls live under the burdens of poverty, domestic violence, molestation and, yes, HIV infection.

One reader was upset that I talked about teaching our daughters how to use condoms rather than just encouraging abstinence. I agree we should encourage our daughters to abstain from sex until they are in healthy, stable relationships. But there is a large (and growing) body of research showing that teaching our children only abstinence instead of comprehensive sex education that includes abstinence as well as clear safer sex guidelines just leaves them in greater danger of having unprotected sex, putting them at higher risk for HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases. HIV/AIDS is a deadly disease. We have a responsibility to ensure our children have every possible weapon to protect them from infection.

Another reader attributed Black women's struggles to their embrace of feminism, rather than structural issues like racism, failing public school systems and the declining availability of urban manufacturing jobs for high-school-educated men. I vehemently disagree. Returning women to the back of the gender bus will only rob them of the power to control their own destinies.

But the most provocative comment came from a man who chastised me for focusing on the plight of Black girls and women because Black men are in far worse shape than Black women. And by almost every measure, he's right. But this is not an either/or proposition. Black women faring badly, but better than Black men, are not mutually exclusive facts. Raising Black women up does not mean pushing black men down. Suggesting we take better care of our daughters does not exclude the need to take better care of our sons.

So I want to say some things about the condition of Black boys and young men. Recent data show white men facing an unemployment rate of just over 10 percent compared with over 18 percent among Black men. Among young Black men without a high-school diploma, the data are catastrophic; nearly half have no jobs or even prospects for employment. These rates are based on a labor-force number which excludes those in prison; given that there are five times as many Blacks behind bars as whites, including the incarcerated would make the terrible unemployment gap even worse.

Black boys/young men are 40 percent of the male US prison population, but represent only 13 percent of the male population in the U.S. If research shows that half of Black girls ages 14 to 19 have an STD, the rate must be also be high among our boys. In 2006, Black teens ages 13-19 accounted for 69 percent of new AIDS cases among teens. Research also shows that the HIV rate among urban gay and bisexual Black men under 30 is in the range of 50 percent.

Recently the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Black AIDS Institute conducted focus groups on attitudes about HIV/AIDS in Black communities. One of the panels involved only Black men. In addition to asking their perspectives on a host of AIDS-related issues, we inquired about the state of their lives. Some of the answers we heard were sobering.

We learned, for example, that young Black men don't just feel isolated from white America — in fact, many of them have written White America off and have long given up on being accepted by the larger society. The shocker is they feel isolated from Black adults, leaders and institutions, from the community that they would traditionally turn to when mainstream society rejected them. Many young Black men believe that Black America has rolled them under the bus — that the oppression they face is not only coming from white people. White women, they say, aren't the only ones clutching their purses and crossing to the other side of the street when they seem them coming; Black women and grandmothers are pulling away from them as well.

The truth of the matter is, a lot of Black adults think of young Black men only as a problem, not part of the solution. As alienated and disillusioned as they might be, young Black men want to participate in our community. We are only fooling ourselves if we think that our community can improve itself while leaving Black boys and young men behind. Just as elevating Black women makes our entire community better, so investing in Black men is good for us as well. As Martin Luther King admonished us forty three years ago, "We are bound together in a single garment of destiny". We need to do both.

Phill Wilson is the founder and CEO of the Black AIDS Institute (www.BlackAIDS.org).

Criticism, Criticism, Criticism

By Ron Walters
NNPA Columnist

(NNPA) - I think that the pundits and the public should face up to one fact. The mess that President Barack Obama inherited will not be fixed in one year, or two or possibly even during his entire term. That makes it exceedingly difficult to determine, in this time framework, especially through the screen of the constant criticism of him and his policies what the real nature of his presidential contribution will be.

The media works on a timeframe of instant results. While grudgingly admitting that the George Bush administration presided over the wars, the sorry state of the economy and the home foreclosure crisis, and passed it on to Obama, they nonetheless, constantly criticize Obama's personal actions and proposals in his attempt to fix these problems. Those who come to his defense in the welter of attacks are rare, sense it appears from surveying many media outlets that most of those who are allowed the privilege of participating in the public interpretation of events are opponents of this White House. The frequency of Republican and conservative Democratic voices invited to comment on every action of the White House has been overwhelming, something the Democratic party did not experience under George Bush.

So, what are we to make of the fact that Obama inherited the worst situation going into office of perhaps any president in American history and that his poll numbers are just below 50% at the end of one year in office? Are these good considering the problems, or do the pundits and the American people realistically expect that he would have resolved the problems they face in one year? Or is this merely a symbol of American discontent with the personal situation that that they impute to the president as the custodian of the problems? I think it is the latter. Somewhere, reality must trump symbolism and it is my belief that this is not only the task of historians, but it is the responsibility of serious media as events occur.

Too often, unjustified criticisms of this Administration have been uttered on the talk shows, the internet and in other forums without opposition by hosts, commentators and other persons who influence public opinion. This means that the media has been influential in driving down Obama's favorable ratings by doing things like trying to make him responsible for the high unemployment rate and the response by the "Tea Party" phenomenon as a legitimate sense of the American people, when it is little more than a carefully crafted and funded Right Wing mobilization.

Too often media commentators have not corrected or given balance to the criticisms such as: George Bush kept us safe during his tenure when no one knows whether that is true; or that Obama promised to put everything on C-SPAN; or that he waited too long to respond to the Detroit airline bomber; or that he hasn't focused on job creation; and that the Stimulus Package has not worked at all.

If George Bush had been as criticized and interrogated as much as Obama, perhaps the edifice of problems that now challenge the very viability of America might have been stopped. In fact, in the context of the problems his administration faces, the personality and actions of Obama exist in a war of interpretation but I do not see them positioning their troops to fight it. Besides the concrete accomplishments of any president, its legacy will often be determined by who wins the war over the interpretation of the actions of his administration at the time it is in office. Those interpretations will often exist for a long time because historians use media interpretations as well.

My sense of this was heightened by remarks by Richard Cohen of the Washington Post who recently wrote that given his low favorable numbers Obama has "failed" as president. How do you fail in one year and is that an accurate interpretation of how to read the polls? Nevertheless, by stating that Obama has failed, Cohen has influenced the judgment of many people in that regard. The lack of reality that resides in such judgments is one of the reasons why some of us believe that the interpretations of Obama's actions have much to do with race, at base a belief in the inferiority of black leadership (even if he doesn't profess to be a black leader). Indeed, a new study by Stanford University researchers strongly correlates racial bias with negative attitudes toward Obama.

That aside, I believe that the nature of the skewed interpretations of Obama's administration have much more to do with the times, the severity of the crisis, the hegemonic power of the Right to influence opinion and the lack of a forceful set of voices to right the balance of opinion. Despite the criticisms, the reality is that the Obama administration has made a dent in the problems America faces. Someone must answer why has he not been given the credit he deserves?

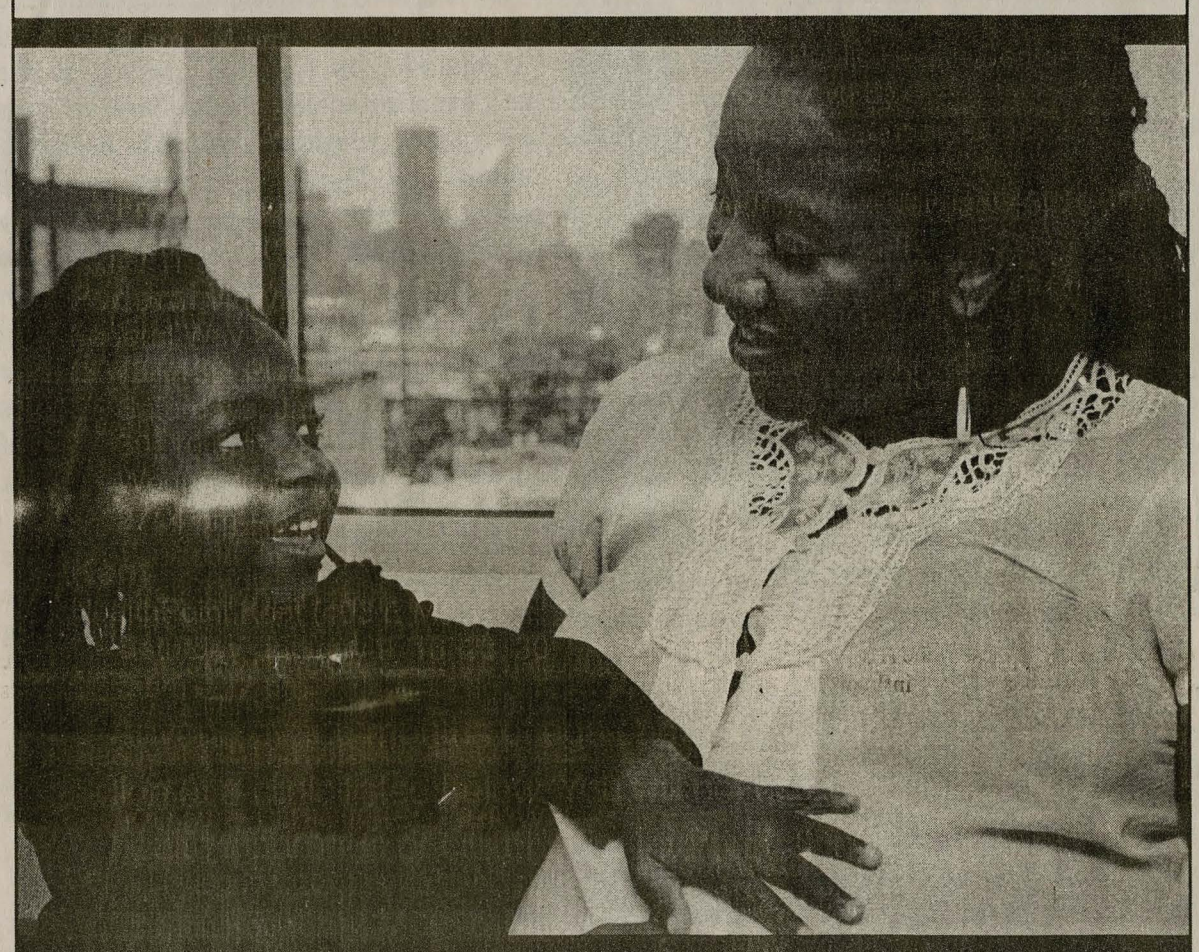
Ron Walters is Professor Emeritus at the University of Maryland and a Political Analysts.

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- Saturdays, January 9, 16, 23, 30; 10 am – 4 pm
- Wednesdays, January 13, 20 , 27; 4 pm – 8 pm

Sea Mar - South Park (8720 14th Ave S)
- Saturday, January 9th; 9 am – 5 pm
- Tuesday, January 12th: 1 pm – 8 pm

Sea Mar – White Center (9650 15th Ave. S.W. #100))
- Thursday, January 14th; 1 pm – 8 pm

For more information, go to www.kingcounty.gov/health/H1N1 or call the Flu Hotline at 877-903-5464

Public Health
Seattle & King County

Five Companies Ordered To Stop Selling Illegal Health Coverage

OLYMPIA – Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler has ordered five companies and seven individuals to stop selling unauthorized health insurance and discount plans in Washington state.

The entities include Serve America Assurance, Ltd. and American Trade Association. Both have been the subject of state consumer protection orders and warnings in other states, including Oklahoma, North Carolina, Indiana, Connecticut, Arkansas and Michigan.

"These companies are not playing by the rules that our state set up to protect consumers," said Kreidler, who heads the agency that regulates insurance in Washington state. "With authorized companies, we review their policies and finances to make sure that they'll be able to make good on their promises. With these companies, consumers have no such assurances."

The order includes Serve America Assurance, Ltd., Beema-Pakistan Company, Ltd., American Trade Association, Smart Data Solutions, and Real Benefits Association. The individuals named in the order include Bart Posey, Colin Youell, William Worthy II, Obed Kirkpatrick, Richard Backman, David Clark, and Saifuddin Ahmed. None are properly licensed to sell health insurance or discount plan products.

Kreidler is ordering the companies and individuals to: turn over a list of all their Washington insurance-related customers, report all premiums paid by those consumers, inform their Washington customers about the cease-and-desist order, and, upon request by the consumer, to replace any improperly sold insurance with a policy from an authorized insurer.

"In many of these cases, the folks who are buying these bargain-basement products are the people who can least afford to be taken advantage of," said Kreidler.

The Insurance Commissioner's office knows of more than 70 Washingtonians who purchased coverage from the companies named in the order. Some have reported problems with delayed or unpaid claims.

Nationwide, more than 10,000 consumers are believed to have purchased this coverage at a cost last year of more than $14 million. The respondents "have acted in concert" to sell Washingtonians a product that consists of a mix of insurance and medical care discounts according to a cease and desist order issued by Kreidler's office. But this product is not authorized in the state, and the sellers are misrepresenting it as comprehensive health coverage.

Based on faxed solicitations and the statements of telemarketers selling the coverage, the order states, "consumers are led to believe that the product offered constitutes comprehensive health insurance, and the bank and credit card accounts of consumers who agree to purchase the product…are immediately debited."

The plans being sold cost at least $199 a month for individuals and $369 for families. A typical faxed sales pitch offered "hospitalization," primary, specialist, or chiropractic care for just "$25 at time of visit," "huge savings on name brand and generic drugs," "up to 60% savings" on vision and hearing care, and coverage of root canals, X-rays, MRIs, EKGs, CT scans, intensive care stays and more. It even promises "pre existing conditions OK… You will be enrolled!"

To protect consumers, Washington law requires people selling insurance to be licensed. Insurance must also be authorized by the insurance commissioner's office, which looks at policy language, financial stability and other factors to make sure that companies can make good on their promises.

"The whole point of regulating the industry is to ensure that consumers are not left holding the bag when they have a claim," said Kreidler. Licensed sellers and authorized insurers are required to comply with laws designed to protect consumers.

In this case, the sellers were not licensed, the product being offered was not authorized, and it was falsely advertised as comprehensive coverage, among multiple other violations.

The five companies and seven individuals have been ordered to immediately stop engaging in the unauthorized business of insurance in the state of Washington, or soliciting Washingtonians to buy the coverage by e-mail, fax, phone, mail or website.

Normal Solid Waste Collections For MLK Holiday

Recycle Your Unwanted Electronics

Seattle garbage, food and yard waste and recycling collections will be on normal schedule for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Holiday, Monday, January 18. Seattle Public Utilities customers should place their containers out for collection by 7 a.m. to ensure collection.

The City of Seattle's North Recycling and Disposal Station in the Fremont/Wallingford area and the South Recycling and Disposal Station in the South Park area will be open on Monday, January 18, during their regular business hours: 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Customers can report a missed garbage, yard waste or recycling collection after 6 PM on the day it was missed by calling (206) 684-3000 or by visiting the On-line Missed Collection form available on SPU's web site.

Holidays left you with old electronics? Seattle Public Utilities will pick up and recycle TVs, computers and other electronic items from your curb for a $20 fee. Call (206) 684-3000 to request an electronics collection. Apartment residents should contact their building manager to arrange for electronics collection.

Looking for a free option? Contact www.ecyclewashington or 1-800-RECYCLE for computer and TV drop-off locations.

Also visit www.takeitbacknetwork.org for cell phone and fluorescent bulb drop-off locations. Some locations charge a fee.

Get Answers To Your Healthcare Questions At The Seattle Public Library

The Seattle Public Library will offer free healthcare counseling sessions from noon to 1:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month at The Seattle Public Library, Beacon Hill Branch, 2821 Beacon Ave. S. The next session is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 4.

The program is free and open to the public. No registration is required. Free parking is available at the branch.

A volunteer counselor will provide one-on-one counseling sessions on healthcare topics such as healthcare options, medical billing and Medicare. The counselor speaks Mandarin, Cantonese and English.

The sessions are provided in partnership with the Chinese Information Services Center and the Washington Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA).

For more information, call the branch at (206) 84-4711.

Sen. Jacobsen Introduces Bill To Create Washington Food Policy Council

OLYMPIA —Citing concerns with the safety and sustainability of our food chain, **Sen. Ken Jacobsen (D-Seattle)** introduced legislation today to create the Washington Food Policy Council.

"There is no single entity tasked with monitoring our food system; it falls to different federal, state and local agencies. This results in an inefficient and ineffective regulatory mess for our farmers and an unsafe food chain for our consumers," Jacobsen said.

Jacobsen's legislation would establish a Washington Food Policy Center tasked with working across all sectors of Washington's food system to coordinate the expansion of production, consumption and access to Washington grown food.

"Washington spends $2 billion annually on obesity-related, preventable illnesses because many lack access to nutritious and affordable food. Our state is facing a record budget deficit. It's time we take a look at solutions that will create long-term solutions," Jacobsen said. "Promoting a healthy, sustainable food supply is good for the farmer, the consumer and the state's budget coffers."

