

# LET'S TALK: A DISCUSSION ABOUT HOUSING IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

## A VIRTUAL TOWN HALL



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Indianapolis Recorder  
Newspaper



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**Panelist:**  
**Dr. Breanca Merritt**  
Director of the  
Center for Research  
on Inclusion and  
Social Policy  
IUPUI



**Panelist:**  
**Mandla Moyo**  
Director of  
Community  
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**Panelist:**  
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**Pearl Carter stands in the front yard of her home on Yandes Street as she points toward an apartment complex and a large, modern house that she says have helped spur gentrification in the area. (Photo/Tyler Fenwick)**

**By TYLER FENWICK**  
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Don't tell Pearl Carter she lives in the Monon16 neighborhood. That's a ploy, she said, to attract new — mostly white — people and businesses.

Carter, 77, lives in Martindale-Brightwood, she'll tell you.

"This is my block," she said with a laugh.

Increasingly, though, it hasn't been Carter's block. It started when the Monon Lofts apartment buildings went up a few years ago. They stand tall on the other side of her backyard. Then there's a newer Mexican restaurant and a coffee shop. White people love the trendy feel of the area, Carter said, plus the Monon Trail is right there.

Carter said she gets a letter in the mail at least once a week from developers offering to pay top dollar for her home. The same is true for her 103-year-old mother who lives across the street, along with other long time residents.

"We feel like we're being smothered out," she

said.

Carter hopes this isn't the beginning of something worse coming to her neighborhood. She still loves sitting on her porch and hosting porch parties. Everyone seems to have a dog, Carter said, and she watches people walk them to make sure they have a bag.

She's glad people want to move into the area, but home prices are climbing — some new builds on Carter's street are worth more than \$200,000 — and the fabric of the community is changing.

"We've been gentrified," she said.

A recent study from the National Community Reinvestment Coalition said the census tract where Carter lives is, in fact, "gentrified," and it ranked Indianapolis No. 12 on a list of the most intensely gentrifying cities from 2013 to 2017.

People use their eyes and ears to judge if their neighborhood is being gentrified, and studies use complex methods and formulas. Some people don't like the term gentrification — they prefer "displacement" or something else — and there isn't a widely agreed upon definition of what gentrification means exactly.

Breanca Merritt, the director of the Center for

**See GENTRIFIED, A4 ►**

## Black homeownership trends look bleak

**By TYLER FENWICK**  
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Amy Harwell is proud of the legacy she's been a part of for more than 50 years on Brouse Avenue. There, just a block west of Keystone Avenue, everyone owns their home — some for more than 60 years — and many have come back to live in their childhood home.

Harwell's husband built the red brick house in the 1950s, and Harwell has lived in it since they married. She keeps the yard and garden in vibrant condition and scoffs at trash that blows onto the grass — presumably left by people who don't live in the area, she thinks.

Harwell's reality is a dream that appears unattainable for many African Americans, though.

Nearly all of the gains made in Black homeownership following the Fair Housing Act of 1968 have been wiped out, a trend that began with the 2008 financial crisis. The homeownership gap between Blacks and whites was at 30

**See HOMEOWNERSHIP, A2 ►**



**Amy Harwell stands in front of the home she has lived in for more than 50 years. Her husband built it in the 1950s. (Photo/Tyler Fenwick)**

## Thousands of renters need help; it could get worse

**By TYLER FENWICK**  
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Families in Marion County who need help paying rent had to act quickly when the city opened an application for assistance July 13. It only took three days for the city to temporarily close the application and start a waitlist because of high demand.

James Taylor, CEO at John Boner Neighborhood Centers, said he thought there was a chance the applications could get shut down on the first day.

"I just think this speaks to the economic pandemic that has coincided with the COVID pandemic and just demonstrates the economic disaster," he said.

The city set aside \$15 million from federal COVID-19 relief funds



specifically for rent assistance, and Lilly Endowment offered about \$10 million to help community centers implement the program through the Indianapolis Community Response Network.

The city received more than 10,000 applications for rent assistance in

the first three days of the program and is now asking users who visit the website, [indyrent.org](http://indyrent.org), to give contact information so they can get on a waitlist. Mayor Joe Hogsett said during a press conference earlier in July that he expects the program to help up to 11,000 households.


Taylor said there were 2,500 people on the waitlist less than 24 hours after the city stopped taking applications. A press release from the city said it could take until the end of this week to process those applications.

Mia Black, assistant director of reentry and community engagement at Christamore House, said the nonprofit took about 20 calls a day from people in Haughville and the near west side asking about rent assistance before the city's program started. The city sent about 100 applications to Christamore House for final review in the first week, according to Black.

"It's ongoing, practically non-stop requests," she said.

There usually isn't a high volume of such requests during the sum-

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HOMEOWNERSHIP

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percentage points in 2017, which is larger than it was in 1968, according to an analysis from the Urban Institute. A study from the Center for Research on Inclusion and Social Policy at IU-PUI found the Black homeownership rate in Marion County is 34%, compared to 64% for whites in the county and 73% for all of Indiana. Even in majority-Black neighborhoods in Marion County, white homeownership is about 20 percentage points higher than Black homeownership. Part of the problem, of course, is income and wealth disparities. Government-sanctioned discrimination effectively locked many African Americans out of homeownership for decades, allowing whites to buy and sell homes more freely and build wealth. The net worth of a white family is now about 10 times that of a Black family, according to Brookings Institution. The Black-white wage gap in 2019 was about 26%, according to the Economic Policy Institute. Phyllis Hackett, who currently lives in the third home she’s owned in Riverside, said it all comes back to the economic conditions that have been forced onto African Americans.

The opportunity for good income just isn’t there for a lot of people, she said, and even for someone who does technically have enough money and good enough credit to buy a home, it can still be a risky move because of all the maintenance costs that come along with it. Homebuyer education can also be a barrier. Krystal Menser, an agent with RE/MAX Legends Group, said some homebuyers don’t know what she considers to be the basics: minimum credit score, debt-to-income ratio and other requirements to get approved for a loan. Homebuyers depend on agents like Menser to walk them through the process. That’s part of an agent’s job, but it also can slow the process. Menser recommends going through a homebuying course like the one at Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership or simply using Google to search for common questions and basic requirements.

Contact staff writer Tyler Fenwick at 317-762-7853. Follow him on Twitter @Ty\_Fenwick.

RENTERS

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mer months, Black explained. It’s the winter months when things start to pick up. But this year is different. About 45,000 fewer people were employed in Marion County in May compared to May 2019, according to data from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development. Future studies will likely show a bleak picture when it comes to low-income neighborhoods with high concentrations of Black residents, who are already more susceptible to health complications from COVID-19. “Low-income neighborhoods are the hardest hit, they’re the first hit, and they’re the last to recover,” Taylor said. He compared it to the financial crisis in 2008 but said that was a “slow train wreck,” whereas now it’s like “we fell off a cliff.” One thing housing advocates worry about is that renters haven’t even seen

the worst of this financial crisis yet. There’s a moratorium on rent in Indiana through July, and the extra \$600 in unemployment is also set to expire at the end of the month. What happens when these safeguards go away? “I think we’re holding our breath to see what that potentially looks like,” said Dean Johns, chief program officer at John Boner Neighborhood Centers. It could look like a wave of evictions, families moving in together to make ends meet, a rise in homelessness. Families that were already struggling before the pandemic could be worse off on the other side. “This has just increased that challenge for them,” Johns said.

Contact staff writer Tyler Fenwick at 317-762-7853. Follow him on Twitter @Ty\_Fenwick.

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# Renter’s assistance during and after the pandemic

By **BREANNA COOPER**  
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In the early days of the shutdown in response to COVID-19, Jada Williams was worried. Not just about getting sick — she’s immunocompromised — but also about losing her home.

Williams, 25, works in the food service industry, and when her hours were cut, she feared she would no longer be able to pay her monthly rent.

“It was lose-lose,” Williams said. “The more I worked, the more likely I was to catch the coronavirus. But that first paycheck after my hours got cut, it just wasn’t enough to make ends meet.”

Williams’ story is not unique, and due to an unpredictable virus, renter’s assistance programs and rent relief have been focal points for local and state governments in recent months.

In June, Mayor Joe Hogsett announced a renter’s assistance grant, funded through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, that will provide eligible Indianapolis residents with up to three months of rent assistance. Gov. Eric Holcomb also announced \$25 million of CARES Act funds was to go toward renter’s assistance throughout the state.

In Indianapolis, city government is working with the Indianapolis Urban League, Indianapolis Public Library and several neighborhood organizations to help residents sign up for the program. The neighborhood organizations will be helping eligible residents receive the funding. The application is a

two-part process. The first part is completed by the renter, and the second part of the application must be completed by a tenant’s landlord or property owner, who have the right to not accept the funds from the grant.

However, Jacob Sipe, executive director of Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority, said he hasn’t seen any instances of landlords refusing the funds. Sipe — who oversees the state, not Marion County — said many landlords and tenants are working together.

“From the conversations I’ve had with landlords and the Indiana Apartment Association, there’s been a high percentage of landlords who are working with their residents to get on a payment plan,” Sipe said. “... We need to make sure we open up lines of communication between the landlord and the renter, and in my experience, everyone has been trying to do that.”

Sipe said the only issues he’s heard from landlords relates to tenants breaking stipulations in their lease other than nonpayment, such as destruction of property.

“For this agreement, the landlord has to agree to not begin any eviction process for at least 45 days,” Sipe said. “Since we’re in the middle of a moratorium, that’s not an issue. Right now, the only thing we’re hearing is that there are some who want to start the eviction process as soon as it’s lifted for other issues a resident is causing.”

However, Sipe encourages anyone who feels they are being discriminated against by a landlord or

property owner to take advantage of Indiana Legal Services or the Indiana Civil Rights Commission.

“Indiana Legal Services is offered free for anyone who is feeling they are being harassed or their landlord is violating any form of fair housing,” Sipe said. “If their landlord has began the eviction process for nonpayment of rent, that’s a clear violation of moratorium, so I would refer them to either of those two sources. They are in their corner.”

Under Indiana law, tenants cannot be discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, religion, ability or age.

There has been a statewide moratorium on evictions since March. When the moratorium is eventually lifted, Sipe hopes organizations and state departments work to make applying for assistance easier than it is right now.

“One of the things we’ve recognized from the very beginning — and it’s been magnified now with the pandemic — is ... it’s a very complex web to figure it all out to apply for assistance,” Stipe said. “We in the housing industry and community leaders should be focused on trying to untangle that web, and help Hoosiers understand where and how they can get assistance.”

Contact staff writer Breanna Cooper at 317-762-7848. Follow her on Twitter @BreannaNCooper.

For more information about tenant rights and assistance, visit indianahousingnow.org.

# Know your rights: understanding evictions

By **BREANNA COOPER**  
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While a March moratorium on evictions, signed by Gov. Eric Holcomb and extended to the end of July, currently makes it illegal for landlords to evict tenants for not paying rent, no one knows how long it will last. For many Hoosiers struggling to make ends meet due to job loss or pay cuts due to the pandemic, the end of the moratorium could mean losing their home.

Luckily, several state and city leaders are making an effort to shine a light on programs — many of which were in existence before the pandemic began — to help tenants work with landlords to prevent evictions and foreclosures.

Jacob Sipe, executive director of Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority, said with the moratorium in place, it gives both landlords and tenants the opportunity to work together to create a payment plan, and

a majority of the landlords he’s worked with have been willing to work with tenants and community organizations to keep people in their homes.

However, if a tenant finds their landlord to be less than cooperative and worries they may be evicted once the moratorium is up, Sipe recommends using HUD’s toolkit. The toolkit helps Indiana residents get more information about their rights and access to resources if they find themselves unable to pay their rent or mortgage.

The toolkit, which can be accessed as a PDF online, includes information on rental assistance, foreclosure prevention, home energy assistance and an eviction and foreclosure guide, the latter specifically in response to COVID-19.

While the moratorium currently in place prevents landlords and property owners from evicting tenants, it does not mean tenants do not have to pay rent for the duration of the pandemic.

In a statement, Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill encouraged Hoosiers who are unlawfully subjected to eviction to contact his office or file a complaint with the office’s Consumer Protection Division.

“The coronavirus pandemic has left thousands of Hoosiers temporarily unemployed and facing financial distress,” Hill said. “It’s important for Hoosier renters and homeowners to be aware of their rights during these difficult times. If you are unlawfully subjected to eviction or foreclosure proceedings during this public health emergency, contact my office. We may be able to help you.”

Under state law, a renter who pays on a monthly basis must be given 30 days warning before an eviction, whereas someone who pays annually must be given three months notice. Sipe said evictions should always be the last resort and often are because the proceedings can be costly for landlords.

With rental assistance programs

being offered in Marion County and around the state, Sipe said landlords who agree to work with the programs must wait 45 days before going ahead with evictions, and encouraged both tenants and landlords to work to create a payment plan to prevent evictions.

However, Sipe encouraged Hoosiers who feel they are being taken advantage of — as well as those who are being threatened with eviction despite the moratorium — to contact Indiana Legal Services, which is free, or the Indiana Civil Rights Commission.

Contact staff writer Breanna Cooper at 317-762-7848. Follow her on Twitter @BreannaNCooper.

## Get help!

Find the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority’s toolkit at [www.in.gov](http://www.in.gov).



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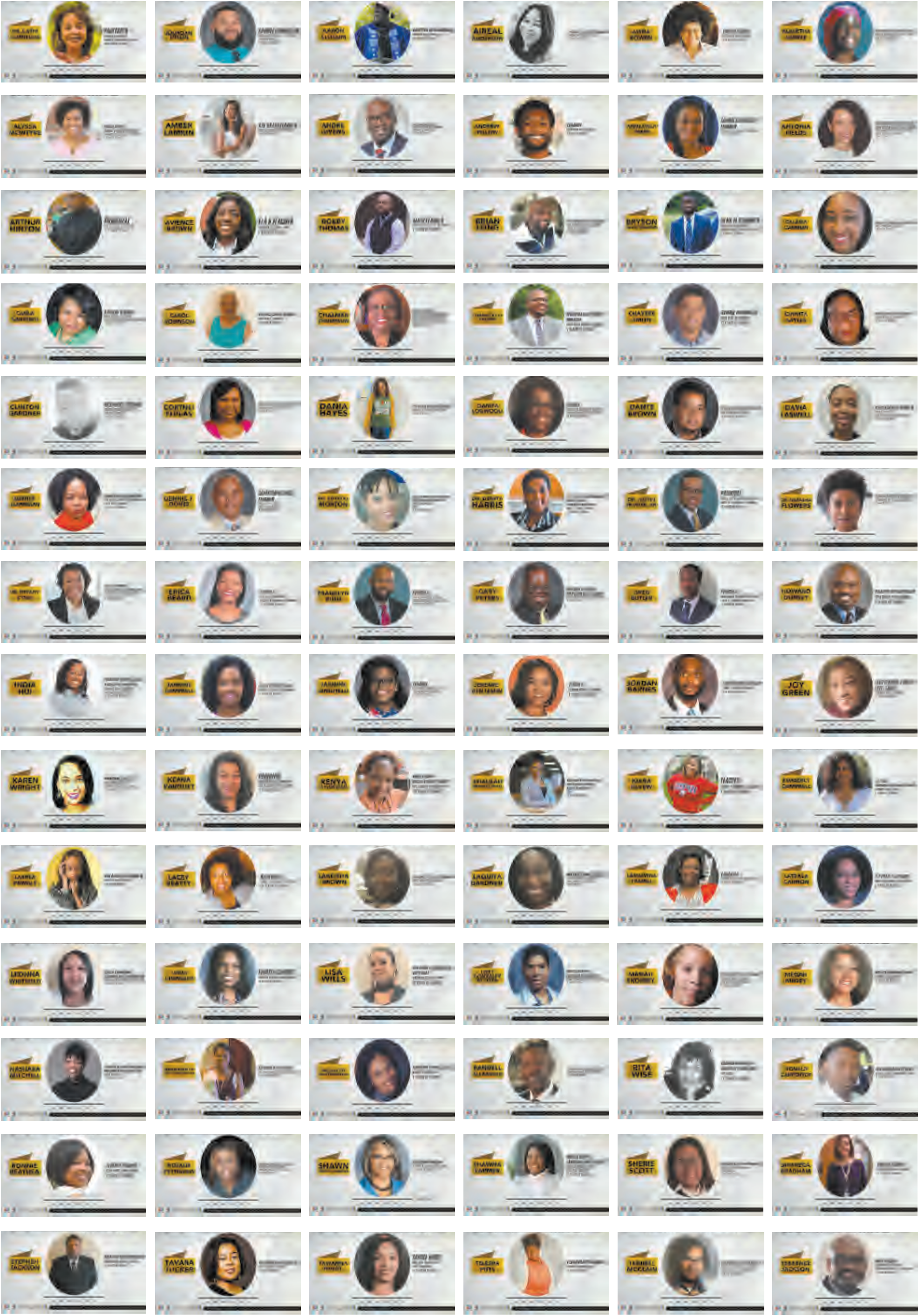
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Several individuals were recently honored during the African-American Excellence in Education Awards virtual presentation. The event was sponsored by EducateMe, Indianapolis Chapter of Indiana Black Expo, Indianapolis Recorder Newspaper, InnoPower, Klipsch Educators College at Marian University, Martin University, and Viable Education Solutions. Pictured below are the award recipients and presenters.



MEET OUR DISTINGUISHED PRESENTERS

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# GENTRIFIED

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Research on Inclusion and Social Policy at IUPUI, said it comes down to disinvestment, followed by opportunity. Riverside, for example, has gone through the disinvestment, and developers are now taking advantage of its proximity to IUPUI and downtown.

“There’s this feeling of being undervalued,” Merritt said of original, longtime residents in gentrified neighborhoods.

## ‘THERE’S NOTHING TO SEE’

The displacement of residents — specifically in predominately African American neighborhoods — has played a significant role in the formation of the city’s west side.

Most notably, the very creation of IUPUI depended on the displacement of several Black neighborhoods. While the communities are largely absent, the evidence of gentrification can today be found in the architecture — specifically apartment buildings — that fill the bustling downtown.

“I think one of the profoundest effects of urban renewal that began in the post-war period, it becomes easier to ignore heritage,” said Dr. Paul Mullins, professor of anthropology at IUPUI. “You can’t recognize the heritage of the community. They don’t borrow style from the [Madam C.J.] Walker building, and they look like they could have been dropped anywhere. If you’re just looking around downtown, there is no African American heritage, there’s nothing to see.”

Mullins said the city looks at the near west side as a “blank slate they can fill with smart development,” which he said really translates to businesses and houses most people can’t afford to live in.

## ‘GENTRIFICATION IS ON THE RACISM SPECTRUM’

Some residents in Riverside have the same fears Carter has for her section of Martindale-Brightwood. In Riverside, new homes are going up for just under \$300,000, and those homes are next to a new brewery.

“When the breweries come in, that’s how you know it’s just too late,” said Renee Davis, a fourth-generation resident in Riverside.

Davis, who briefly lived on the near east side for work, recently closed on a house in Riverside and said she feels lucky to get back before possibly being priced out.

The \$300,000 homes are causing worry, but there’s also 16 Tech, an innovation district being developed along Indiana Avenue.

“We have a lot of older residents that still live here,” Davis said. “I’m really concerned that we’re gonna have an issue with predatory lending practices really taking off over here.”

Phyllis Hackett — affectionately known as “Sakina” in the community — moved to Riverside as a child with her family in 1961. They lived on the

south side and were displaced by the construction of I-70. Later, in Riverside, parts of her neighborhood were cut off again — this time by I-65.

Those experiences have helped shape Hackett’s thinking. She doesn’t like pinning a word like “gentrification” to a larger problem.

“Gentrification is on the racism spectrum,” said Hackett, who bought her first home in Riverside in 1998 and now lives in her third purchased home.

Like Carter, Hackett said she’s glad people want to live in Riverside, where the median property value is about a quarter of what it is for all of Marion County, according to Indy Vitals. There are three golf courses in the area, she pointed out, plus a regional park.

“The \$300,000 shows there is value here,” she said, “and not only in terms of new housing but the current housing that exists. I would think they all should be considered \$300,000.”

Hackett isn’t very worried about displacement, though that’s contingent on reparations — or “something somewhat similar to that” — to give original residents the economic fortitude to stay in place.

## A CATALYST FOR HOMELESSNESS

According to the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), gentrification has been identified as one of the biggest catalysts leading to homelessness. Due to rising property values, ERIC has found links between gentrification and an increase in evictions, a decrease in capital for individuals in minority populations, and an increase in overall homelessness.

As of 2019, roughly 1,600 Indianapolis residents struggle with homelessness. During a June press conference, Mayor Joe Hogsett said the city is taking “a holistic approach to public safety” and is working with a “homeless outreach street team ... to engage individuals who find themselves downtown without a place to stay.”

Some activists say this is a short-term solution that doesn’t adequately solve for the issues of systemic racism and gentrification in the city.

## ‘SAFE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT’

Gentrification is a series of events that happen over time, and there isn’t a lone remedy. But some believe community land trusts can be part of the solution.

A community land trust, or CLT, is a nonprofit meant to keep housing permanently affordable by buying property and maintaining control and governance. The CLT can sell or lease homes (or other buildings) that are on the land. A homeowner, for example, holds a deed for the house and a lease for the underlying land.

If a homeowner chooses to sell, the resale price is

determined by a formula contained in the ground lease, which usually leads to a resale price that is lower than the market value.

Near East Area Renewal (NEAR) is in the process of setting up a CLT. It hired a consulting group last year and could have an organization established by the end of August, according to Davis, the Riverside resident who is also a housing advocate for the group.

The goal, Davis said, is to have housing units within the CLT in about a year. She identified neighborhoods close to downtown as the most likely starting points.

“We want to ensure that when we’re building houses and making houses available for people to buy, that we’re fostering long-term, mixed-income neighborhoods,” she said.

A lot of people see homeownership as a way to generate wealth. Numerous studies have pointed to the homeownership gap between Blacks and whites as one of the drivers in wealth disparities.

It could be a tough sell in some cases to get someone on board with the idea that they won’t be able to cash out later by selling their home at the market rate, and Davis said that’s something NEAR has considered as it looks for community support.

But CLTs aren’t designed as tools for wealth; they’re meant to make sure the market doesn’t hijack a neighborhood. Plus, as Davis pointed out, it’s not as though homeowners are just out of luck if and when they sell, since they can still get some equity.

Andy Beck, a co-founder of Homes for All Indy, said CLTs could help combat gentrification by allowing middle- and lower-income people to “exist in this community where the market does not allow for them to exist anymore.”

There are some CLTs with organizational structures, but Beck said he isn’t aware of a CLT in Indianapolis that has actually purchased properties.

Beck is part of the Homes for All Indy Community Land Trust Coalition, which he said meets regularly about how to promote the cause and is working on a vision for a city-wide CLT model.

Current affordable housing models let residents get into a home they would normally be priced out of, Beck said, but then they can sell the home later and turn a big profit. A CLT would make sure that home continues to be affordable for the next family.

“Safe, affordable housing is a human right,” Beck said. “My priority is providing people housing, giving people roofs over their heads, providing some stability and opportunity.”

Contact staff writer Tyler Fenwick at 317-762-7853. Follow him on Twitter @Ty\_Fenwick. Contact staff writer Breanna Cooper at 317-762-7848. Follow her on Twitter @BreannaNCooper.

# Get ready for fall Put immunizations on your to-do list

Immunizations, or shots, can help protect you and your family from getting sick. They can also help with prevention of exposing others to disease. As you prepare for the season change, add a visit to your doctor to ask about the right shots for you and your family.

**Prepare for the appointment**

It can be helpful to bring your immunization records to the appointment so the doctor knows which vaccines you’ve already had. If you don’t have them, ask your doctor’s office or call the Indiana State Health Department to get your records. If you know you’ve missed shots, ask about the “catch up schedule.”

If you’re not feeling well on the day you’re supposed to get the shots, let the doctor know. If you have a mild illness, like a low fever or cold, you may still be able to get them. However, for more serious illnesses, you may need to come back when you’re feeling better.

Also tell the doctor if you have a long-term health condition, take medications that can weaken your immune system, or had a severe allergic reaction to a shot in the past.

**It’s OK if you have safety concerns. Just talk about it.**

Most people think the vaccines in shots are safe, but there are many who still have doubts.

It’s important to know before a vaccine is approved for use in the United States, it goes through years of careful testing to make sure it’s safe and effective. Once a vaccine is approved, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continue to monitor its use to make sure there are no safety concerns.

Like any medication, vaccines can cause side effects. In most cases, side effects are mild, like soreness where you got the shot, but it goes away within a few days. Severe, long-lasting side effects from vaccines are rare. If you still have concerns about shots, talk with your doctor.

**Shots protect all ages**

Every year, tens of thousands of Americans get sick from diseases that could’ve been prevented by getting their shots. The goal of vaccines is to prevent a person from getting a disease, or to make the person “immune” to the disease. An immunization record shows how many shots are needed to become immune. Shots are recommended for:

- Kids.
- Teens.
- Adults based on factors such as age, health conditions, lifestyle, jobs and travel.

Shots are also important in protecting those who are most susceptible to illness:

- Infants and young children
- The elderly
- Those with chronic conditions and weakened immune systems

**Disease outbreaks still happen**

Immunizations have greatly reduced infectious diseases that once regularly harmed or killed many people. However, the germs that cause vaccine-preventable diseases still exist, and can be spread to people who are not protected. Some include:

- Chickenpox
- Hepatitis B
- Human papillomavirus (HPV)
- Influenza (flu)
- Meningitis
- Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Pneumonia
- Polio
- Shingles
- Tetanus

Currently, Indiana is battling an increase in hepatitis A cases and measles. Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver

infection. Measles is an illness caused by a virus that spreads very easily from person to person.

**Getting the shots you need is easy**

You can get most recommended shots at your doctor’s office. Many are also available at local health centers, health departments and travel clinics. To find out where to go, visit [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov) and enter your ZIP code.

**Immunizations are no- or low-cost**

Most Medicaid health insurance plans cover recommended shots for members at little or no cost. If you don’t have health insurance, you may qualify for Medicaid. As one of the nation’s leading health plans, Anthem helps Hoosiers on Medicaid through the Hoosier Healthwise, Healthy Indiana Plan and Hoosier Care Connect programs. To see if you’re eligible today, visit [fssabenefits.in.gov](http://fssabenefits.in.gov) or call 1-800-403-0864.

**Indiana resources for everyone**

Call the Indiana State Department of Health Immunization Division at 1-800-701-0704 with any questions

about 2020-2021 school immunization requirements.

Hoosiers also have access to MyVaxIndiana. This allows you to directly access your or your family’s immunization records from any computer. Each record also features the CDC’s immunization schedule so parents can plan for future shots. For questions about MyVaxIndiana, call the Helpdesk at 1-888-227-4439, visit [www.myvaxindiana.in.gov](http://www.myvaxindiana.in.gov), or email [MyVaxIndiana@isdh.in.gov](mailto:MyVaxIndiana@isdh.in.gov).

**Anthem resources for members**

Anthem has many resources to help members with important shots and health care information. Visit [www.anthem.com/inmedicaid](http://www.anthem.com/inmedicaid) or call Member Services at 1-866-408-6131 (Hoosier Healthwise and Healthy Indiana Plan) or 1-844-284-1797 (Hoosier Care Connect); (TTY) 711 to learn more.

Contributed by Dr. Julie Keck, Medical Director, Indiana Medicaid, Anthem.

Sources: CDC, Anthem, Indiana State Department of Health, American Academy of Pediatrics, vaccines.gov, TIME

Keep your family protected Remember your immunizations!

Immunizations, or shots, can help protect you and your family from getting sick. They can also help stop the spread of a disease. As you prepare for the season change, add a visit to your doctor to make sure your shots are up-to-date.

You can get most recommended shots at your doctor's office. Find out where to go – visit [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov) and enter your ZIP code.

For more immunization facts, visit [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov). For more about Anthem, visit [www.anthem.com/inmedicaid](http://www.anthem.com/inmedicaid).

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EDITORIAL

Housing is an essential, basic human right

By OSEYE BOYD



Housing isn’t a luxury. Having shelter to protect you from the elements is essential. Most living creatures have some form of habitat in which they live. Humans, being the fancy creatures we are, took this simple and basic concept of shelter and elevated it into luxury high-rise apartments and mansions with indoor and outdoor pools, tennis courts and six-car garages.

While I don’t begrudge anyone who can afford such luxury, at the end of the day, it all comes down to having a place to lay your head, a place where you feel comfortable and safe and a place where you belong.

For many of us, however, decent and affordable housing is a luxury, and owning your home is a fantasy.

In October, the Recorder interviewed a man in his 60s who paid \$600 in rent from his \$700 disability check for a two-bedroom house in the 46218 zip code. With only \$100 left, the man couldn’t afford to pay other bills and eventually his gas and water were shut off. Faced with fees and past due balances, this becomes an insurmountable situation and an unfortunate cycle that far too many face.

This is but one example of Black residents in Marion County who are rent burdened. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, spending 30% of gross household income on housing costs is considered rent burdened. The man in the example is considered to be severely rent burdened, meaning he spends more than 50% of income on housing costs. In Marion County 46% of households are renter occupied and Black residents make up the majority of those considered rent burdened.

And it’s not just renters whose living situation is precarious. Those who do find themselves in the homeownership category often worry about foreclosure — especially after the emergence of COVID-19, which left many with reduced hours or without a job. Only about 34% of African Americans in Indianapolis own homes. Many of the majority-Black neighborhoods are a result of redlining in the 1930s.

Redlining was a color-coding process whereby government surveyors would classify neighborhoods as best (green), still desirable (blue), definitely declining (yellow) and hazardous (red). Redlined areas were near pollutants or other environmental contaminants such as sewer overflow. Redlined areas were a credit risk, so local lenders didn’t provide loans to potential homeowners. The practice ended in 1968, but not before creating

neighborhoods with health hazards, lower property values and lower life expectancy for Black residents.

Now, some of these neighborhoods have been or are being redeveloped. The word redeveloped or the phrase “up and coming” are often harbingers of gentrification to come. They’re loaded words often signifying to longtime residents they will be pushed out for a bigger, better and whiter community.

Because housing is so essential to quality of life, the Recorder dedicated a series of stories on various aspects of housing, as well as a virtual town hall. We planned for the package of stories to run before the COVID-19 pandemic began, but soon realized the already dire housing situation for many became even more so once the public health crisis began.

In this edition, we delve into issues such as gentrification, evictions, renter’s rights and assistance. The virtual town hall will be 11 a.m. July 25 on our Facebook page. We will speak with experts who can address housing issues in our city as well as provide resources for those needing assistance. We hope to find some solutions as well, but we know these issues will take time and a concerted effort by many to fix. Whether renting or buying, everyone deserves to live in affordable, decent and safe housing.

OPINIONS

‘Strong Men, Strong Minds’ rally

By LARRY SMITH



On Saturday, Aug. 8, African American men and boys of all ages will gather on the grounds of the Indiana Statehouse to participate in the inaugural “Strong Men, Strong Minds Empowerment Rally.” The convening will take place from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

As the title suggests, the rally is designed to empower, educate and encourage Black men and boys. Specifically, its purpose statement is as follows: “The mission of Strong Men, Strong Minds is to work diligently with and on behalf of Black males of all ages in Central Indiana. We endeavor to facilitate their mental, emotional, physical and intellectual development to prepare them to lead the world.”

Several weeks ago, city-county councilman Keith Graves and I had a discussion regarding the crises that Black men and boys are facing in Indianapolis — one of several times that we have done so. We decided to take a number of actions, including enlisting

other men who share our commitment to being action- and solution-oriented. The rally is one result of that discussion.

In addition to councilman Graves and me, the other organizers are: James Garrett and Kenneth Allen, executive director and board chair, respectively, of the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males; Dr. Clyde Posley, pastor of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church; and Robert Shegog, president and COO of the Indianapolis Recorder.

The rally will feature speeches from a group of dynamic leaders who will address such topics as economic empowerment, educational attainment, fatherhood and how to de-escalate conflict in Black communities, among other highly relevant topics.

Why Black men and boys? Or, more specifically, why not Black women and girls? The short answer is that it’s a question of focusing on Black males as opposed to a lack of concern for Black females. Personally, I have a son and a grandson whom I love deeply. I have lived most of the experiences that they will face as they become Black men. I am equally concerned about the myriad challenges that my two daughters face (despite the fact

that one of them is an adult).

This particular rally is of, by and for Black men and boys. We highly respect and value our female counterparts, and we recognize them as equals. In no way do we intend to minimize the unique challenges that Black women and girls face. However, we are not equipped to conduct a similar event on their behalf.

Consider the following example. Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), as far as I know, has never sponsored a campaign to raise awareness of child abductions. Driving under the influence and the kidnapping of children are both very important societal challenges. The fact that MADD focuses on the former rather than the latter does not diminish the urgency and appropriateness of its mission. (Incidentally, Black-led organizations are expected to address all challenges that their community faces, which is not true of white-led organizations. This line of “thinking” is increasingly leveled at Black Lives Matter, which was not created to address what is often labeled as “Black-on-Black crime.”)

In planning the rally, the organizing committee thought carefully about which leaders are best equipped to

speak to the topics that we identified. Among those leaders is Minister Nuri Muhammad of the Nation of Islam, who will offer an address regarding the historical and contemporary roles that Black men have played. Nathan McGuire, MFT, will discuss techniques regarding how to reduce violence in Black communities. Camishe Nunley, LMHC CTS, will discuss “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome.” These and other leaders will speak to the hearts and heads of Black men and boys, thereby encouraging them to identify and deploy their unique talents in creating a better reality for future generations.

It is important to note that this is not a one-time event. One of the possibilities that we’re considering is developing Strong Men, Strong Minds into an organization. While attendees are not required to register in advance, we ask that they consider doing so, as this will assist the organizing committee in planning. Those who wish to do so may register or get more information by visiting the Strong Men Strong Minds Indy Facebook page.

*Larry Smith is a community leader. Contact him at [larry@leaf-llc.com](mailto:larry@leaf-llc.com).*

Conspire for outcomes, not gestures

By PATRICK JONES



There are a myriad of disparities and gaps that exist in our society that place people of color at a disadvantage from their white neighbors and peers. The foundations for these gaps were created when our systems began by individual actors working together, who forcibly and strategically placed whiteness as the norm and first priority. Today, disparities are perpetuated by intentional action, but also by those who fiercely uphold the status quo or who have internalized whiteness as the standard to meet and serve. This is white supremacy. To some, this term only means extreme violence and calculated menace from an era we have left behind; white hoods gathered at night beneath burning crosses.

Time may have passed, but white hoods have transformed into police uniforms, teaching attire, corporate suits and business casual garb on the streets of our nation.

In our education system, it shows up in school policies that ban Black children from wearing their hair in natural styles or when schools don’t bother to translate important communication for non-English speaking families. It shows up as a noticeable difference in vendors who resemble the student population and serve the school community in a social sense — not simply business. It shows when districts post equity statements and continue to ignore widening achievement gaps between their white students and students of color — or low literacy rates among their African American students.

None of it is fair to the children we serve. None of it is fair to us.

The education system in our country was created by and for white families in every legal designation the system espouses — traditional, charter or private. The voices and needs of Black and brown students were not taken into account when this system began, and in many instances, are still passed over today. Our entire society lives with the consequences of this. Imagine what our world could be if we truly educated Black and brown minds to their fullest potential. We would have had the cure for cancer right now. Think of the discoveries, art, policies, writing and leaders lost to the perpetuation of this system.

A society operating at only a fraction of its capacity can solve nothing. But, we don’t have to keep withering in the suffocating prison built for us by white supremacy.

Over the last 18 months, The Mind Trust worked to analyze our ability in acting as an antiracist organization and the path forward from ways we have failed. We examined and acknowledged the ways we held up a white supremacist system and asked

ourselves what deep work and outcomes are needed to become conspirators against racial injustice. We are asking ourselves questions that we call on other organizations to ask of themselves: How do we begin to reimagine and dismantle a system like this? In what ways do we participate in the system? How do we start building systems predicated on a different reality? How do we not criminalize African American men, women and children? How do we not remove or ignore Latino perspectives and needs?

We will all have to engage in deep interrogation and corporate soul searching to upend this current system. We cannot truly repair our country’s broken soul until we explore the root from which it came and why we continue to align with its principles. We need an effective strategy to masterfully challenge the system, because just as we will fight to tear down this house, some in our midst will fight to rebuild every wall that falls. Some will work diligently to protect this system that is a prison to some and a palace to others.

We will need to hold a deep commitment to this work as a social and moral imperative that can only be judged by outcomes, not feelings of pity or vain name-changing gestures. The commitment will need to produce tangible results for our communities that go beyond the notion that this is simply the right thing to do. For it is right, but it also creates an opportunity for our nation to live up to the promise of equality in the preamble that has been a farce since it was inscribed.

The Mind Trust is committed to continuing the necessary work to dismantle inequitable systems, as doing so can only make this nation, this world, truly live up to its fullest potential. We ask you to join us.

*Patrick Jones is senior vice president of Leadership and Equity at The Mind Trust, an Indianapolis-based education nonprofit.*

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## 5 questions to ask your health insurer during the COVID-19 pandemic

By STEVE SMITHERMAN

COVID-19 is changing nearly every aspect of people's lives. Whether it be overall health and well-being, social life, quality time spent with family or job situation, everyone, regardless of income levels, has felt the effects of this global crisis. In fact, according to a consumer survey by Access One, 75% of consumers in the highest-income bracket of \$100,000-plus are concerned they will lose their jobs, and 64% of families are worried they will be unable to pay their medical expenses due to the pandemic.

According to a recent NPR article, 33.5 million people in the U.S. have filed for unemployment benefits, and a large majority of those people receive access to health insurance through their jobs. A report from the Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that 27 million people have recently lost health insurance. These statistics are concerning to our team at CareSource, a multi-state managed health plan. Our members' health and well-being are of the utmost importance and keeping up with your family's health during these times is especially vital.

The pandemic is putting intense pressure on state and local agencies that administer Medicaid. More people are now seeking health insurance and find themselves Medicaid eligible for the first time due to a decrease in income or job loss, per a report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. People may not realize the benefits they can now receive on Medicaid. They may also think that their network quality will change if they switch to Medicaid, and this is not the case. At CareSource, we're taking a look at the questions Hoosiers should be asking their health insurer to keep their family safe and covered during this time.

### 1. WHAT IS MEDICAID AND HOW WOULD SOMEONE KNOW IF THEY QUALIFY?

Medicaid currently covers 63.9 million Americans, based on data from the January 2020 Enrollment Report available on the Centers for Medicare



and Medicaid Services. It provides health coverage to people, including low-income adults, children, pregnant women, elderly adults and people with disabilities. The program is funded jointly by states and the federal government. To find out if you qualify, contact your state Medicaid agency, as eligibility may vary from state to state. To find out if you qualify in Indiana, you can complete an online application on [www.in.gov/medicaid/](http://www.in.gov/medicaid/) and click on "Members."

### 2. WHAT ARE THE MEDICAID OPTIONS OFFERED IN INDIANA?

Indiana offers the Healthy Indiana Plan (HIP), Hoosier Care Connect (HCC), Hoosier Healthwise (HHW), traditional Medicaid and other programs. Each program serves a different population. Additionally, when you sign up for Medicaid, the quality of your networks will not change. To learn about the different coverage plans and what each cover, visit the state's Medicaid page. You can also connect with an Indiana Navigator for assistance in choosing and applying for coverage. Navigators assist consumers in completing federal health insurance Marketplace applications or Indiana health coverage applications, like Medicaid.

### 3. WHAT SERVICES ARE COVERED UNDER INDIANA'S MEDICAID PLANS?

Services vary for each plan. For example, if you qualify for HIP as an adult between the ages of 19-64, your options might include HIP Plus, HIP Basic, HIP State Plan Plus and HIP

State Plan Basic. All HIP plans pay for medical costs for members. Some HIP plans also have vision, dental and chiropractic coverage.

HHW covers low-income parents or caretakers, pregnant women and children up to age 19. If you qualify for HHW, the program will cover medical care such as doctor visits, prescription medicine, mental health care, dental care, hospitalizations, surgeries and family planning at little or no cost to the member or the member's family. The plan also has benefits for children with special health care needs such as asthma or diabetes. The benefits covered include preventive care, such as well-child visits and regular checkups, and mental health and substance abuse treatment. This type of treatment is especially relevant now during the COVID-19 pandemic, as people find it difficult to maintain mental health while social distancing and struggle with recovery.

### 4. CAN MY HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY HELP ME IN OTHER WAYS THAN PROVIDING COVERAGE?

Some health insurance providers do offer other services to serve their members. For example, at CareSource we have the Life Services program. CareSource Life Services provides tools to help people remove any barriers they may be facing. The benefit is available to CareSource members age 16 and older and to the parents or guardians of minor children who are members.

Life Services can help people find a job through the JobConnect program. Even now, JobConnect life coaches are

providing people with employment opportunities, despite the difficulties presented by COVID-19. We are currently connecting people with jobs in the hospitality field, medical device assembly and warehouse, the health care realm and in manufacturing. JobConnect focuses on finding people a fulfilling career, so they're set for the long term, instead of a temporary job. Ultimately, the mission is to impact members' lives and well-being and to take care of their needs so they can better care for themselves and their families.

### 5. WHAT ARE MY NEXT STEPS TO APPLY FOR MEDICAID?

First, find out if you qualify for health coverage by completing an online application on the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration Benefits Portal. If you qualify, you can apply through the Health Insurance Marketplace by creating an account. You can also apply directly to your state Medicaid agency. Additionally, you can contact an Indiana Navigator such as Covering Kids and Families.

We have seen that the increase in Medicaid enrollment is lagging compared to the high unemployment rate. People may not realize that Medicaid can now be a smart option to keep your family safe and healthy. Explore the benefits associated with Medicaid and find the plan that works best for your needs. Visit [caresource.com](http://caresource.com) for more information, or call 317-982-6400 to speak with a member services representative about what you may qualify for in Indiana.

*Steve Smitherman is CareSource Indiana president.*

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## CDC Responder Stories: Communicating to protect workers during COVID-19

In the face of an infectious disease outbreak without a vaccine or known treatment, communicating prevention messages is critical to slowing the spread of the pandemic.

While recommended protective measures like social distancing, cloth face coverings, and frequent handwashing are the same for everyone, some people face more barriers when it comes to taking these actions.

In late April, the pandemic reached beyond the cities to the rural towns where meat and poultry plant workers continued to go into work. Social distancing was a challenge. Outbreaks in these plants could affect entire towns, especially in areas where healthcare services and testing are hard to access.

Maggie Silver, a health communication specialist at CDC's office in Fort Collins, Colorado, recalls seeing an uptick in cases among workers at a leading beef processing plant that closed for 10 days to put a hold on the spread of COVID-19 in the facility.

The local health department recognized that containing the outbreak would depend on effective communication with employees, the community, and partners, so it called on Maggie to develop a risk communication plan.

Getting workers safely back to the plant and maintaining the food supply required communicating messages that would promote behavior changes among workers and supervisors. In two days, Maggie developed a risk communication plan for the plant and got buy-in from the company and county health department. The plan included main prevention messages and outreach strategies such as texting workers, posting signs around the facility, and sharing messages through trusted sources like the union and community organizations.

A few weeks later, Maggie joined a CDC team deployed to Pierre, South Dakota. In a state that has more

cows than people, meat and poultry production is a big part of the community, and COVID-19 spread was an ongoing concern.

Maggie had a more hands-on approach on the ground while the facilities remained open. She visited a facility with rising numbers of COVID-19 cases when the plant manager invited a team of the state health and agricultural departments and CDC staffers to tour the facility.

"Employees in these facilities are in constant motion when working," Maggie says. "They are quickly changing for their shift or doing their job on the floor. Lunch is their only down time."

Maggie recommended placing signs with prevention messages in areas such as around the lunchroom, time clocks, and bathrooms, and suggested sending reading materials home with workers. She learned that employees come from many different ethnic backgrounds and many speak and read limited English. Picture-based signs with little text would help broaden effective outreach.

The risk communication plan that Maggie developed for these two companies has been adapted and used in other meat and poultry production facilities. Strong partnerships and tailored risk communication messaging continue to be essential tools in protecting workers and communities.

Getting the word out meant first truly understanding the community interactions and daily lives of the workers. Trusted community groups, like refugee organizations, helped get messaging to the workers and their families.

"The first step to coming up with any plan to support these facilities is to get to know all of the partners involved and their roles and goals," says Maggie. "[They] all play an important part in keeping the facilities open."

###



## Churches are tax-exempt, and Indianapolis has a lot of them



Rock Fresh Market is part of Eastern Star Church's ROCK Initiative, which Pastor Jeffrey Johnson Sr. says is the social expression of the church's faith. (Photo/Tyler Fenwick)

By TYLER FENWICK  
tylerf@indyrecorder.com

Indianapolis has a lot of churches. They don't pay property taxes, don't pay income taxes — but they do find ways to meet the spiritual and many times material needs of the communities they serve.

A 2015 analysis by PropertyShark found Indianapolis has more churches and other religious sites than any other city in the country, with one for every 289 people. There are nearly 2,900 churches and religious sites in total, according to the study.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution says Congress is not allowed to establish a religion or prohibit people from practicing their own religion — separation of church and state, in other words.

It's the foundational reason for why churches don't pay property and income taxes. Government and religion shouldn't become tangled, the Constitution's writers declared, and taxes are one of the sure ways to

See CHURCHES B2 ►

## REV. C.T. VIVIAN, key civil rights leader, has died at 95

By DESIREE SEALS and MICHAEL WARREN  
Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The Rev. C.T. Vivian, an early and key adviser to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. who organized pivotal civil rights campaigns and spent decades advocating for justice and equality, died July 17 at the age of 95.

Vivian began staging sit-ins against segregation in Peoria, Illinois, in the 1940s — a dozen years before lunch-counter protests by college students made national news. He met King soon after the budding civil rights leader's leadership of the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott, and helped translate ideas into action by organizing the Freedom Rides that forced federal intervention across the South.

Vivian boldly challenged a segregationist sheriff while trying to register Black voters in Selma, Alabama, where hundreds, then thousands, later marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

"You can turn your back now and you can keep your club in your hand, but you cannot beat down justice. And we will register to vote because as citizens of these United States we have the right to do it," Vivian declared, wagging his index finger at Sheriff Jim Clark as the cameras rolled.

The sheriff then punched him, and news coverage of the assault helped turned a local registration drive into a national phenomenon.

Former diplomat and congressman Andrew Young, another close King confidant, said Vivian was always "one of the people who had the most insight, wisdom, integrity and dedication."

Barack Obama, who honored Vivian with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2013, tweeted Friday that "he was always one of the first in the action — a Freedom Rider, a marcher in Selma, beaten, jailed, almost killed, absorbing blows in hopes that fewer of us would have to."

"He waged nonviolent campaigns for integration across the south, and campaigns for economic justice throughout the north, knowing that even after the Voting Rights Act and Civil Rights Act that he helped win, our long journey to equality was nowhere near finished," Obama wrote.

Obama also drew a direct line from "Vivian and all the heroes in that Civil Rights Generation" to today's generation of activists, saying "I have to imagine that seeing the largest protest movement in history unfold over his final months gave the Reverend a final dose of hope."

Among many other tributes, The King Center in Atlanta tweeted: "Rev. C.T. Vivian. Courageous. Brilliant. Sacrificial. A powerfully well-lived life that lifted humanity. We will miss you." And the Rev. Al Sharpton, who heads the National Action Network, tweeted that Vivian "made this nation and world a better place. ... RIP, my friend."

Speaking with students in Tennessee 50 years after the Voting Rights Act was signed into law, Vivian urged them to act strategically as they advocated for justice and equality. The Civil Rights Movement was effective not only because of its nonviolence, but because activists made sure their messages were amplified, he said.

"This is what made the movement: Our voice was really heard. But it didn't happen by accident; we made certain it was heard," Vivian said.

Cordy Tindell Vivian was born July 28, 1924, in Howard County, Missouri, but moved to Macomb,



Rev. C.T. Vivian, AP

Illinois, with his mother as a young boy. He studied theology alongside future civil rights leader and U.S. Congressman John Lewis at the American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee, where they trained waves of activists in nonviolent protest.

King made Vivian his national director of affiliates at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and sent him around the South to register voters, an effort that brought Vivian to Selma in 1965. Standing on the Dallas County courthouse steps as a line of Black people stretched down the block behind him, he argued for their voting rights until Clark's punch knocked him flat.

Vivian stood back up and kept talking before he was stitched up and jailed, and his mistreatment helped draw thousands of protesters, whose determination to march from Selma to Montgomery pressured Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act later that year.

Vivian continued to serve in the SCLC after King's assassination in 1968, and became its interim president in 2012, lending renewed credibility after the organization stagnated for years. He also co-founded VISION, the precursor to Outward Bound; the Center for Democratic Renewal; and a consulting firm that encouraged improvements in race relations.

"There must always be the understanding of what Martin had in mind for this organization," Vivian said in a 2012 interview. "Nonviolent, direct action makes us successful. We learned how to solve social problems without violence. We cannot allow the nation or the world to ever forget that."

Vivian died at home in Atlanta of natural causes, his friend and business partner Don Rivers confirmed to The Associated Press.

Vivian had a stroke about two months ago but seemed to recover, Rivers said. Then, "he just stopped eating," he said.

Rivers, 67, said he was 21 when he met Vivian at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. Back then, he worked as an audio director when Vivian was the dean of the university's divinity school. The two remained close over the years and Rivers said he handled the business side of Vivian's work.

"He's such a nice, gentle, courageous man," Rivers said, adding that the reverend wasn't in it for the money. "He was always giving, giving, giving."



Rep. John Lewis, AP

## Religious faith was a lifelong constant for Rep. John Lewis

By JAY REEVES  
Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — From his childhood, when he preached to chickens in the dirt-poor South, to his decades as a moral force in Congress, religious faith was a constant in the life of Rep. John Lewis.

Lewis spent boyhood days as a make-believe minister, preaching to a congregation of clucking birds at his rural home in Alabama. As a teen, inspired by the oratory and leadership of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., he went on to become a civil rights activist in his own right while attending a Baptist college in Tennessee. Like the earliest evangelists of Christianity, he was beaten and jailed for speaking out when others were silent.

In later years, as an elder member of the U.S. House, Lewis advocated for both justice and reconciliation. Returning to a tactic he first learned nearly 60 years earlier, Lewis led a sit-in on the House floor in 2016 to protest the failure of gun-control measures.

Lewis died July 17 at age 80.

Despite memories that sometimes brought him to tears, and defying the diminishing strength that came with advancing age, Lewis for years led annual pilgrimages to the Deep South for fellow members of Congress seeking to both honor the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement and push it in new directions.

"He is the reason I come," House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, a longtime participant in the pilgrimages, said of Lewis during the 2019 tour, sponsored by the Faith and Politics Institute in Washington.

Born in 1940, Lewis grew up near Troy, Alabama, at a time when racial segregation was the law and ministers were typically leading members of the Black community. Since his sharecropper family lived in a state run by and for white people, Lewis had virtually no Black political leaders to emulate as a role model.

So, as Lewis often recounted, he would gather together a congregation composed of siblings, cousins and fowl in the yard and emulate the preachers he heard on Sunday at church with his family.

"And I would start speaking or preaching. And when I look back, some of these chickens would bow their heads. Some of these chickens would shake their heads. They never quite said 'Amen,' but I'm convinced that some of those chickens that I preached to during the '40s and the '50s tended to listen to me much better than some of my colleagues listen to me today," he said in an interview with C-SPAN in 2012.

Lewis was 15 when Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a city bus in Montgomery, about 60 miles north of Lewis' hometown. He had already witnessed the harsh reality of "white only" signs on public restrooms and water fountains. He was drawn to scratchy radio broadcasts by King, then a young minister in his first pastorate in Montgomery, and later the leader of the yearlong bus boycott that followed Parks' arrest.

"He was not concerned about the streets of heaven and the pearly gates and the streets paved with milk and honey," Lewis said of King in an interview for the documentary "Eyes on the Prize," released in 1987. "He was more concerned about the streets of Montgomery and the way that Black people and poor people were being treated in Montgomery."

After meeting King during a trip to Montgomery, Lewis enrolled at American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee, where he considered becoming a minister. He learned the concepts of nonviolent protest through ministers and the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference, an arm of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, plus the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

Activism fueled by religion guided Lewis' life. In later years he worried aloud that some people failed to understand civil rights activism as an extension of faith for many participants in the movement, rooted in stories about Jesus and the words of Gandhi, who was born Hindu and embraced many teachings.

"In my estimation, the Civil Rights Movement was a religious phenomenon. When we'd go out to sit in or go out to march, I felt, and I really believe, there was a force in front of us and a force behind us, 'cause sometimes you didn't know what to do. You didn't know what to say, you didn't know how you were going to make it through the day or through the night. But somehow and some way, you believed — you had faith — that it all was going to be all right," Lewis told PBS in 2004.



# SPIRITUAL OUTLOOK We are one community

By **JOHNSON A. BEAVEN III**

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.” Acts 17:24-26 NIV



Our country’s battle on improving race relations has been a continuing struggle for centuries. Even to this day racial inequality and injustice are still major issues amid the most recent reoccurrences of police brutality against people of color. Progress has been made and hope of continuing is promising.

The root cause of racial inequality and its injustices is racism. Working at rooting out racism in all its forms and from every strata of society has been a tactical and tedious process almost akin to fighting and surviving the current coronavirus pandemic. One major difference: Coronavirus is colorblind and doesn’t discriminate.

Inequality is the effect of racism due to racism’s core idea of superiority. Prejudice, discrimination or antagonism directed at or against someone of a different color, ethnicity or nationality is based on the belief, however instilled, that one’s own race is superior. Thus, other races are viewed not as good, not as acceptable to be favored as members of one’s own race. This results in unfair, inequitable and, at times, inhumane treatment of those persons.

The vital starting point in understanding the ill of racism is espousing a biblical worldview of creation. That understanding provides a perspective on how to view humanity and the races, and what that means with regard to racism and treatment of others.

The Bible is clear regarding racism. It repudiates any opinionated idea of inequality among the races. The core idea of racial superiority isn’t supported in Scripture as how human relationship is to be expressed or experienced. The biblical ideal is equality of the races by creation. We are one community having the same value based on our origin from one breath and one blood — God’s breath and Adam’s blood.

The biblical creation account portrays this unity and equality of the human race in Adam. God determined to make humanity in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:26, 27). He formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). God made Eve from a rib taken out of Adam (Genesis 2:21-23). From Adam and Eve humanity was birthed (Genesis 5:1-3). After the flood, humanity continued from Noah’s sons and spread out in the earth (Genesis 9:19; 10:1).

Since we are one community by creation, we should regard equality of the races. No one race, ethnicity or nationality is superior over another. Races are to be respected by humane, ethical and equal treatment because of humanity’s equal dignity and worth — created in the image of God.

In addressing an issue of how people were treating each other, the prophet asked, “Are we not all children of the same Father? Are we not all created by the same God?” (Malachi 2:10). Scripture declares “the rich and poor have this in common — the Lord made them both” and “the poor and the oppressor have this in common — the Lord gives sight to the eyes of both” (Proverbs 22:2; 29:13 respectively).

The Bible gives a glimpse of the heavenly congregation composed of one diverse body, inclusive of every tribe, language, people and nation with a shared equality in the kingdom of God (Revelation 5:9, 10; 7:9, 10).

Since there is no superiority in heaven, such should be strived for here on Earth. The Lord’s Prayer puts it this way: “Our Father who is in heaven; hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9, 10).

*Rev. Johnson A. Beaven III is pastor of Citadel of Faith Church of God in Christ. Contact him via email at [jabeaven@gmail.com](mailto:jabeaven@gmail.com) or Twitter @jbeaven.*

## CHURCHES

► Continued from B1

remember government is there.

Strictly considering dollars and cents, tax-exempt churches lead to a considerable amount of lost tax revenue for communities, which could be especially impactful in lower-income neighborhoods.

Using property tax data and value assessments from the Marion County Assessor’s Office, the Recorder sampled 20 churches — mostly in Center Township — to get a sense of how much money that might be.

The results: Those 20 churches would have owed an estimated \$576,538 for tax year 2018. That comes to an average of almost \$29,000. Property tax rates vary within Marion County and change over the years, but the numbers become staggering when considering what that means for churches that have been around for decades.

Jeffrey Johnson Sr., senior pastor at Eastern Star Church, can’t say if the trade-off is fair, “but I do know we’re doing an awful lot of good work in a community that this city and the state is benefiting from,” he said.

Eastern Star has invested more than \$10 million in the Arlington Woods neighborhood for housing, education, food security and other support over the last three years, Johnson said, which dwarfs the amount of money the church would have paid in taxes over that time.

Eastern Star has the ROCK Initiative, which began four years ago and includes a credit union, grocery store, financial education and legal clinic. The initiative is based at the Sunset at Arlington Woods building, which also has apartments.

The church also renovates houses and builds new houses to sell at more affordable prices. There are currently six renovations and seven new builds, Johnson said.

“We don’t believe God put us here by accident,” he said.

Churches aren’t alone in being exempted from some taxes, of course, because it applies to

other nonprofits. Churches are exempt from filing financial information with the Internal Revenue Service, though, including a form that tracks spending. Other 501(c)(3) organizations and charities have to provide that information.

Even the Freedom From Religion Foundation, which says its purpose is to promote the separation of church and state, doesn’t have much to say about churches being tax-exempt because it’s a well-established tenant of church-state separation.

It spends much more time bringing attention to the fact that churches don’t have to file financial information with the IRS. The group recently announced it will continue challenging the rule in court.

The Black church is one of the bedrock institutions for Black Americans. It’s a place to organize, a place to get help paying rent, a place to find food. And that’s all on top of providing spiritual and emotional support.

“When we find our communities are in need of basic living assistance, the church steps in,” said Janae Pitts-Murdock, interim pastor at Light of the World Christian Church.

Light of the World doesn’t have the same financial resources as Eastern Star — few churches do — but Pitts-Murdock said churches have a way of getting creative with what they have in order to serve their communities. Especially when considering low-income communities, residents may be more willing to turn to the church rather than a local government or agencies they feel have left them behind.

“They trust that the church is not gonna use their need against them,” Pitts-Murdock said. “Sometimes, in strictly social service agencies, people are just another number and they’re just another face.”

*Contact staff writer Tyler Fenwick at 317-762-7853. Follow him on Twitter @Ty\_Fenwick.*

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Black businesses in Indy collaborate to uplift fellow business owners

By MIKAILI AZZIZ

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a hard hit for many. But with businesses forced to close for months at a time, it seems Black-owned businesses in Indianapolis were especially affected.

Local Black business owners are using these tough times as an opportunity to uplift other fellow Black businesses in the city. From hosting podcasts, social media blasts and creating online directories, these are just a few of the initiatives local business owners have undertaken to help one another. While initiatives such as these aren't new, COVID-19 has resulted in a new urgency.

"I created a form to get a little more information from our Black-owned businesses, and what I got back was very eye opening," said Tamara Cypress, founder of the #BlackBusinessesMatter campaign in Indy. "Forty-two percent said that they needed help with websites, 57% said they needed help with social media, and over 60% said they're not certified with the city."

The statistics on a nationwide level may also be seen as concerning.

The Washington Post reported this year "the number of working African American business owners in the United States plummeted more than 40% as COVID-19 shut down much of the economy — a far steeper drop than other racial groups experienced."

Cypress, like others, knew that something needed to be done. In partnership with the Indianapolis Urban League, the campaign entails weekly podcasts that showcase local Black businesses.

"This is truly a passion campaign, intended to help, uplift and advocate for Black businesses," Cypress added.

In a similar way, the Indy Black Chamber is also giving Black-owned businesses a shoutout in a partnership with WRTV.

Every Friday, anywhere between one to four businesses are featured on the Indy Black Chamber's Facebook page. These businesses are also featured on WRTV's Facebook page and in the "Hiring Hoosiers," "We're Open Indy" and "The Rebound: Indiana" sections of its website.

"We have a phone number available for viewers to call in and purchase things during the Facebook Live," said Anita Williams, vice chair of Indy Black Chamber. "That's what's important right now:



Support Black businesses in Indy

Interested in supporting Black-owned businesses? Various initiatives are underway in Indy in an effort to promote Black businesses. Shop Black Indy: On-line database featuring over 200 Black-owned businesses in Indy. To register your business or search for local Black businesses, visit [www.ShopBlackIndy.com](http://www.ShopBlackIndy.com). Indy Black Chamber of Commerce: Five-year-old organization created to help educate, enhance and develop Black businesses. For more information, visit their Facebook page. #BlackBusinesses-Matter: Multi-faceted marketing campaign designed to serve and advocate for Black businesses. For more information, visit their Facebook page.

purchases need to be made so that they can stay in business."

Bunmi Akintomide, founder of Shop Black Indy, is also using his platform to make local Black-owned businesses easily accessible.

Shop Black Indy, an online directory featuring Indy's Black-owned businesses, is rapidly growing. As of July, the website features over 200 businesses.

"I noticed a gap, and I wanted to make it easy for Black-owned businesses to be recognized, found and searched for," said Akintomide. "Between June 1 and July 17, we've had almost 4,000 users on the website, from all over."

Akintomide uses both personal and social media networks to seek out new businesses to add to the

directory, but Black business owners can also register on the website, [ShopBlackIndy.com](http://ShopBlackIndy.com).

Despite the differences in the outlets used to promote Black businesses, local business owners have made it clear that all hands must be on deck to ensure the growth of a city-wide, Black-owned business network.

"All of our contributions together will help change the trajectory and change the narrative," Cypress said. "We need everyone working together at the same time to make those real, equitable changes that we seek."

Contact newsroom intern Mikaili Azziz at 317-924-5143. Follow her on Twitter @mikailiazziz.

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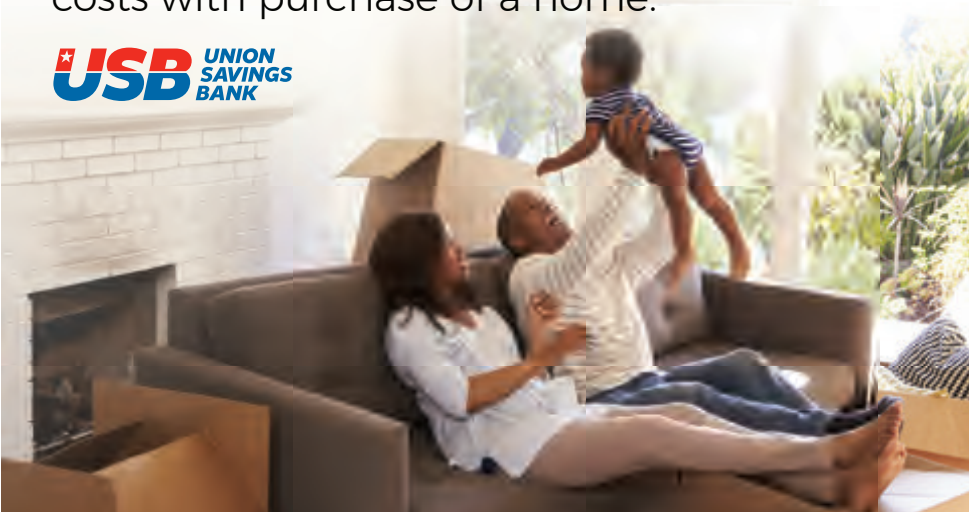
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## Oladipo is making the decision easy for the Pacers

By DANNY BRIDGES

I have never contended to know Victor Oladipo that well at all.

Sure, he's seen my ugly mug at Pacers practices, after games and occasionally at off-the-court team functions. That's hardly an in-depth knowledge of what makes this talented young man tick, and I will readily admit there's no inside scoop here with yours truly, but rather I'm simply reading the tea leaves lately concerning No. 4, which gives us more than a snapshot of his professional intentions.

Actually, Oladipo is saying quite a bit to both his employer and his fans without actually speaking definitively in terms of his future, choosing instead to communicate his concerns regarding the alleged state of his physical condition through a reporter, as opposed to going through the proper channels with the team media relations department, which has stood by him throughout his entire tenure.

It's not the first time a player has postured for an extension of his current deal, which in this case expires after next season, and it certainly won't be the last time that unnecessary drama is spoon-fed to a member of the media without the team's knowledge. Unfortunately, that's quite common in today's NBA, and teams generally allow these types of miscues to work themselves out.

After all, when a player is under contract for another year, there is leverage, and that goes hand in hand with any forced negotiations.

In Oladipo's case, the first shot fired across the bow was back in January, when he informed Stadium reporter Shams Charania (as opposed to the team) that he was ready to return from a catastrophic injury which took nearly a year of rehabilitation, thereby forcing the Pacers to hastily conduct a press conference denoting such



**Pacers Victor Oladipo hit a reverse layup for two of his game high 23 points. (Recorder file photo)**

before the Jan. 29 contest against the Chicago Bulls at Bankers Life Fieldhouse, which would turn out to be an ill-advised decision on Oladipo's part. Clearly, he was not ready to play again and it showed as he struggled mightily with the rigors of NBA-level competition. The quest to return as quickly as possible would be derailed by COVID-19, and the stoppage of play forced Oladipo to conduct an individual workout regimen as opposed to playing actual games. When the league announced its final plan to resume the season some four months later, he again utilized Charania to announce he would not be participating in the revamped NBA season and instead will concentrate on rehabbing more.

Along the way he "discovered" the Pacers were not obligated to pay him the \$3 million that remained on his contract for the balance of this pan-

demically-ridden season if he sat out, so after a conversation with the players union, he recently announced (this time without Charania) there is a good chance he will play in Orlando, where the league has created an allegedly safe bubble-type environment for the conclusion of the regular season and playoffs.

As a point of clarification, I will concede that only Oladipo knows what his health is at this point and also once again point out the severity of such an injury, which in reality may not be one he can fully recover from. Clearly, there is a very good chance he will never return to the form he displayed prior to rupturing his quadriceps tendon, and that would be tragic for a career that was clearly heading to star status, and a possible maximum-deal contract.

Those facts aside, the manner in which Oladipo has handled his profes-

sional affairs of late with the Pacers leaves a lot to be desired.

Is it a ploy by his agent to secure an extension that at this point his employer would balk at, or is it simply coming to terms with the fact that he isn't 100% healthy and may never be again?

No one could blame him for sitting out the rest of this year and focusing on next season, but it's time to make that decision and communicate it respectfully through the proper channels, as opposed to the ridiculous manner in which he's currently doing things. The clock is ticking and while his deal for next year is fully guaranteed for \$21 million, Oladipo is clearly looking to his next contract. The problem is how he's orchestrating the negotiations, which has become embarrassing for him and those who "advise" him. Will he be able to regain his health and play at a high level again? I sure hope so, but there is an obligation on his part to maintain professional communications with the Pacers, and to date they've given him a pass. Something tells me that pass has an expiration date upon it, and while Oladipo is apparently betting on his past to secure a new deal, the future for him is at best unclear. The Pacers obviously hold all the cards, but he can help himself dramatically by simply communicating to them directly as opposed to all the buffers he's employing. Seems like a simple thing to do, but I honestly don't think the young man gets it, and that's a recipe for more confusion and ultimately the end of a promising relationship between a talented player and a franchise that's been very supportive, one with a rabid fan base that adores him, both on and off the court.

*Danny Bridges, who hopes Victor Oladipo can get healthy and prosper accordingly, can be reached at 317-370-8447 or at bridgeshd@aol.com.*

## 2020 NHRA Summer Nationals at Lucas Oil Raceway Park



**Fans who attended the NHRA Summer Nationals at Lucas Oil Raceway Park were required to wear face coverings and practice social distancing.**



**J.R. Todd, racing in the Funny Car series, lost in the semifinal round of the 2020 NHRA Summer Nationals. (Photos/Walt Thomas)**



## Indy Eleven down Sporting KC II



**Indy Eleven kept the momentum going with a 2-1 win over Sporting KC II on July 18 at Lucas Oil Stadium. Top: Andrew Carleton (30) hits the turf as the ball rolls by.**



**Indy Eleven fans celebrate following a goal. Left: Tyler Pasher (23) battles with a KC defender for the ball. (Photos/Walt Thomas)**