

Governor candidates make their case for your vote



Gov. Eric Holcomb

By TYLER FENWICK
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The race for governor in Indiana this election cycle doesn't feature a competitive primary in either party, but it's still an opportunity to ask the candidates how they plan to earn votes in November.

The Recorder reached out to Gov. Eric Holcomb and candidate Dr. Woody Myers to ask why African Americans should vote for them, what makes them the right leader for Indiana and what the state should do in the future if it isn't safe to vote in person.

The campaign for Holcomb — the Republican incumbent — pointed to a bias crimes law signed last year, which allows judges handing down criminal sentences to consider bias due to victims' real or perceived traits.

The campaign also highlighted "opportunity zones" that are meant to spur investment and create jobs in economically challenged areas.

Myers, the Democratic challenger, said Indiana needs new leadership. He would be the first Democrat to serve as governor since Joe Kernan, who left office in 2005.

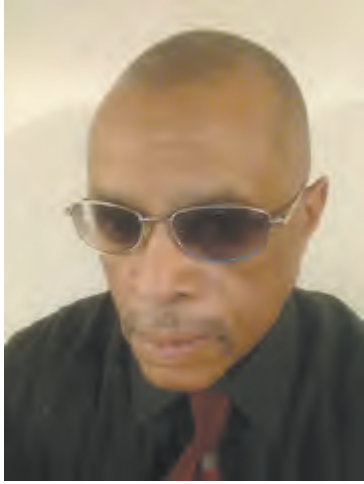
Citing disproportionate incarceration rates, Myers said he would review criminal justice policies, pro-



Dr. Woody Myers

See VOTE A4 ►

COVID-19 brought campaign challenges and perhaps new ideas about voting



Edwin Lewis Jones



State Rep. Cherrish Pryor



State Rep. Robin Shackleford



State Sen. Jean Breaux

By TYLER FENWICK tylerf@indyrecorder.com and BREANNA COOPER
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When Edwin Lewis Jones ran for a seat in the Indiana House of Representatives more than a decade ago, he would go door to door handing out campaign flyers as he trained for the 500 Festival half marathon.

There are two problems with that approach in 2020: The half marathon was canceled, and most people probably aren't keen on opening the door for a stranger these days.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced candidates to adjust their campaign styles, since almost all forms of in-person events have had to be canceled or postponed. Restrictions are starting to loosen, but even a delayed primary couldn't save traditional voter outreach.

Jones, a Democrat who is running in District 98, said he's spent a lot of time on social media, which has been a difficult adjustment for a former lead singer who prefers face-to-face interac-

tion.

He also hands out flyers at grocery stores and other essential businesses. People are still receptive to taking a piece of paper from another person, Jones said, as long as he's wearing gloves and a face mask.

State Rep. John Bartlett, the Democratic incumbent for District 95 in the House of Representatives, said he also hasn't been knocking on doors like he would normally do.

"I don't think I have the virus, but I could knock on your door and engage with you and you cough or whatever and I get it," he said. "Then I go to the next door, and I'm spreading the

disease."

Eugene Dooley is running against Bartlett to represent District 95. While the pandemic has kept him from campaigning door to door, he's been using social media as a tool to reach more constituents.

"A lot of people are online now, and they use social media as a way to 'get out of the house,'" Dooley said. "In my opinion, if people are not utilizing social media, they aren't meeting their constituents."

Denise Paul Hatch, a Democrat running for District 96, believes social media-based campaigning and vote-by-mail will be the norm even after the pandemic.

"This virus is going to stay with us," Hatch said. "Until we get a vaccine, people won't want to go or work at the polls, and this will become the new normal."

District 96 incumbent Greg Porter, a Democrat, believes vote-by-mail is "favorable," and is glad to see Indiana following in the footsteps of California and Oregon, where vote-by-mail is the norm.

See CHALLENGES A4 ►



Dr. Howard Fuller



Shannon Williams

The light of inequity shines brightly for Blacks

By DR. HOWARD FULLER
and SHANNON WILLIAMS

Howard Fuller has traveled the world advocating for Black people. From the communities inhabited by poor Black people in Durham, North Carolina, to the bush of Mozambique, and throughout his beloved city of Milwaukee. His steadfast determination and absolute

See LIGHT A3 ►



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IPS graduating class of 2020: You’ve got this!

By ALEESIA JOHNSON

IPS Class of 2020, you do not need me to tell you that you are graduating into a scary and complicated time. Your parents, grandparents and mentors don’t need reminding of that either.

So, instead, I want to write to you today about two things: resilience and grace.

Let’s start with resilience, because you’ve already got it — even if you don’t realize it yet. You have successfully completed high school under never-before-seen circumstances. You’ve shown that you can adapt, invent, make a new plan and succeed. And you are going to take that flexibility, resourcefulness and resilience with you through the rest of your lives.

I’m proud of you for what you’ve already achieved. But more than that, I’m excited for what you will do next as you adapt to our new world, roll with the punches and thrive.

For many of you that means thriving in enrollment at a college or university. Aldo Medina, who’s graduating from Arsenal Technical High School, experienced challenges in life but didn’t let those obstacles get in the way of his goals. He persisted. He was resilient and always bounced back. In the fall, Aldo will attend Harvard University.

There’s also Olivia Cropper, who’s graduating from Shortridge High School. She balanced the rigor of her International Baccalaureate studies with her passion for animals. She volunteered extensively at the Humane Society, even organizing a summer camp for the organization. She’s headed to Hawaii Pacific University, where she’ll study marine biology.

That’s the IPS Class of 2020. Aldo and Olivia, you’ve got this.

For others, enlistment in the military is where you’ll thrive. Like De’Asia Womack, a young woman graduating from George Washington High School who took her summer between junior and senior year to complete basic training. She will begin serving our country next month in the United States Army.

That’s the IPS Class of 2020. De’Asia, you’ve got this.

And, for some, employment and starting their careers immediately after high school is the goal. That’s what Toryion Simmons, who’s graduating from Crispus Attucks High School, plans to do. Through her studies in the Health Sciences Academy at Attucks, she developed a passion for helping others in critical medical situations. She’s now pursuing a career as a 911 operator and eventually wants to become an emergency medical technician (EMT).

That’s the IPS Class of 2020. Toryion, you’ve got this.

I also want to talk to you a little about grace. Please extend grace to yourself — that means not being so hard on yourself for the things you may be feeling. It’s OK to be sad that you aren’t getting to walk across a big stage in front of your loved ones. It’s OK to be angry that prom was canceled and you aren’t getting to wear that perfect dress or tuxedo that you’d found. It’s OK to be frustrated that you’ve got it harder than a lot of classes before you. You are going through a lot. But what I ask is that you treat yourself with kindness and compassion — and you keep going.

Please also extend grace to each other — your friends and families are dealing with a lot, too. Life takes a village, so stay connected and stay supported. Don’t forget that IPS is always here for you, and we are a part of your village. Whatever your path ahead, you don’t need to walk it alone.

So, I want you to do something for me now. Stop reading here, pick up your cell phone, and send a text. I want you to text “THANK YOU” to someone who helped you complete this journey. And text them “CONGRATULATIONS” too — because no one reaches this day by themselves. Just because we can’t all be at a ceremony together doesn’t mean we can’t celebrate and honor one another.

Class of 2020, I’m so proud of you and what you’ve accomplished. I can’t wait to hear about the difference you will make in our community and our world in the years ahead. Always know you’ve got an IPS village cheering for you all the way.

Aleesia Johnson is superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools.

LIGHT

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refusal to accept the inequities that define so many communities in this country, particularly those inhabited by low-income and working-class Black and Brown families, have kept him in the fight for over 50 years.

Shannon Williams has spent her entire life being a champion for others. Whether it was defending special needs peers during her childhood, serving as a mentor to help others pursue and experience meaningful professional opportunities, or educating her community as a journalist and longtime leader of one of America’s oldest and most respected African American newspapers; her quest to empower others has always been fueled by her deep belief in equity.

Throughout all of our experiences, we both agree that the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect it’s had on the people of America is unlike anything either of us has witnessed in our lifetime. But as usual, any crisis of this proportion will always have a disproportionately negative impact on the people who are already living with pain and suffering. However, the focus of our attention in this column is Black people.

We are not in the group who tout the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic is shining a light on the inequities of America for poor Black people. That light of inequity has been shining brightly for anyone who wanted to see it since we were brought here from Africa — first as indentured servants and then as slaves. The pain that permeates our community has been ever-present.

As we pondered over the state of being for our people, we are reminded of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He said, “The central quality in (Black peoples’) life is pain-pain so old and deep that it shows in every moment of (our) existence. It emerges in the cheerlessness of (our) sorrow(ful) songs, in the melancholy of (our) blues and in the pathos of (our) sermons. Black people while laughing (are shedding) invisible tears that no hand can wipe away. In a highly competitive world, (Black people) know that a cloud of persistent denial stands between (us) and the sun, between (us) and life and power, between (us) and whatever we need.”

As we confront this pain and suffering one thing is clear, we must not engage in “happy talk” about “we are in this together” and “we are going to be alright.” From our point of view, we are not all experiencing this pandemic in the same way. The death toll of Black people is outrageous and unacceptable. And so is the idea that the economy is going to

bounce back quickly. We know that for many of our people this pandemic has only exacerbated their economic predicament, and it will have devastating consequences for years to come.

In our quest to figure out what to “do” and how to “be” during this weird, socially-distant and emotionally-draining time, the two of us find ourselves reflecting on something we’ve both known for years: the scales are unbalanced, be it from a racial, gender or socioeconomic status. As pleasant and uplifting as the phrase intends to be, saying “we are all in this together” is a fictional statement that discounts the reality that millions of people experience every day. We are not all in this together because we are not all suffering in the same way. Those of us who are blessed to have food, clothing and shelter are able to do our jobs from home, have Zoom accounts, etc. We are not experiencing this crisis in the same way as people who have lost their jobs, or people whose job is to risk exposure to save our lives, or who must go to low-paying jobs so that we can remain safe at home. No! We are not all in this “together” in the same way.

We are both very caring and committed individuals who, because we understand this difference, our actions and advocacy are always going to be aimed at changing the situation faced by the most vulnerable of our people. We know they are experiencing pain. A pain we feel along with them. For us, the point of peoples’ pain permeates through our bodies like thread through fabric. It is something that never leaves us. That’s why these COVID times are so difficult for the two of us. We know what our people are going through — what they have always gone through, however, this time our advocacy and ability to connect in ways natural for us are grossly limited. And because of that, the constant state of anger that William Grier and Price Cobbs wrote about in their 1968 book “Black Rage” is stronger and even more resolute today.

So here we are, simultaneously in a constant state of rage and pain. We each know how to negotiate those feelings to function, but they never go away, as they are generations old and have always been there. In our individual worlds we continue to fight the good fight for our people while entities such as The Mind Trust and the Dr. Howard Fuller Collegiate Academy, both institutions we represent, work to advance educational opportunities for Black and brown children. However, we are left wondering what happens next, beyond all that is now. What happens when normalcy resumes? What will be the new normal for our people — the

ones who always carry the brunt of the repercussions of downtrodden economies, broken criminal justice systems and now global pandemics? How will our people, our Black and brown people, emerge? And how will the effects of our suffering that are already generations deep live in our bodies and minds? Our people have endured so much — from being stolen from our native land to dehumanized at the U.S. border, and so many more barbarous acts in between and beyond those periods of time. The recent murder of Ahmaud Arbery, a Black man who was stalked and gunned down while innocently jogging, is yet another example of the atrocious acts our people experience. However, sadly, this injustice will not be the last. History is our proof of that. So, what’s next? What are the solutions?

We don’t know the answers, and in full transparency, that frustrates the hell out of us. Perhaps the solutions elude us at this point because we realize there needs to be an overhaul of multiple systems — deep, ugly discriminatory systems — to ensure these problems are truly resolved. Currently, the two of us work to disrupt the education system that has failed our people since the beginning of time. And while our work will continue, albeit in modified ways, there are things you can do ... that we all can do. We must always venture beyond our pain to help others with theirs. Our deepest responsibility is to support the people who have the least and truly feel the pain of what our people are going through.

If there is one thing we hope you get out of reading this, it is to always focus your help at the beginning point of pain for others. This is what has guided each of us along our respective paths, and it is what might just help all of us move one step closer to the country the United States says it is, rather than the nation we actually are.

Dr. Howard Fuller is director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He previously served as superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools. Shannon Williams is a journalist and former president of the Indianapolis Recorder Newspaper. She currently serves as senior vice president of Community Engagement at The Mind Trust, an Indianapolis-based education nonprofit that works to ensure all children have access to a high-quality education.

We know what our people are going through — what they have always gone through, however, this time our advocacy and ability to connect in ways natural for us are grossly limited.



If I could do one thing, I’d have a daycare closer to work.

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VOTE

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grams and tactics to make sure minority and low-income people aren't targeted.

An April poll from Indy Politics found Holcomb 20 points ahead of Myers.

Myers, a millionaire venture capitalist, entered the race in July 2019 but doesn't enjoy the same name recognition as Holcomb, who's been governor since 2017 and has gotten an hour of free TV exposure most weekdays during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Holcomb's campaign said he has proven himself to be the right leader through this crisis because he began working with experts before Indiana had its first confirmed case.

"We're responsibly and methodically coming out of our needed period of hunkering down at home," the campaign said, "and we will continue to rely on science and medical expertise to guide us moving forward."

Myers, a physician and former Indiana health commissioner, cited his experience dealing with the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s.

"Then, we were frequently mired in fear, misinformation and distrust," Myers said. "It's reminiscent of what's happening across Indiana today amid the coronavirus pandemic."

He said the public doesn't have confidence that the measures taken at the state level have been enough. Myers, who has previously said he would call a special legislative session if governor right now, said Holcomb hasn't done enough to protect Hoosiers.

COVID-19 caught elected officials off guard in an election year. Holcomb delayed the primary to June 2, and everyone is allowed to vote by mail for the primary.

Going forward, though, Myers said the state needs to make mail-in ballots "easily accessible for all voters" and that using that method now will give the state an opportunity to perfect the process.

Holcomb's campaign did not directly answer the question about what should be done in future elections when it isn't safe to vote in person.

"Everyone should be comfortable knowing that our elections are conducted in a safe and secure manner," the campaign said. "We've made the necessary adjustments to our primary this year to ensure that."

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



CHALLENGES

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State Rep. Robin Shackleford, a Democrat who currently occupies the District 98 seat, said the pandemic is taking up a lot of her time as an elected official — answering questions from constituents, starting a health disparities task force and so on — so campaigning has almost moved to the background.

"I have not had time to put out my signs yet," Shackleford said. "I haven't had time to make the calls I need to make."

If the 2020 primary can't be the sole focus of someone trying to keep their seat in the Indiana Legislature, it certainly isn't a top priority for many of the people who will vote or have already voted.

State Rep. Cherrish Pryor, the Democratic incumbent for the House of Representatives in District 94, is unopposed in the primary and hasn't had to worry much about an adjustment to campaigning — not yet anyway.

But she looks out at voters in Indiana, especially African Americans, and sees how all of this is probably overwhelming.

This a census year, there's a pandemic, and now the primary is here.

"It's a lot of stuff all happening at one time," Pryor said. "I think our community, once we get past this coronavirus, we're gonna have to have some serious healing."

If anything positive might come out of this election cycle, it could be that candidates were forced to get creative.

Even though Jones doesn't prefer campaigning online, he knows he's probably been able to reach more people that way. That's important for a candidate who doesn't have a campaign manager or communications manager.

State Sen. Jean Breaux, a Democrat running for reelection in District 34, moved her entire campaign online in response to the pandemic. She is in the process of creating a web series, via Zoom, where she plans on interviewing people around the city. She's

also using Facebook and Twitter to reach voters.

Shackleford hopes having a widespread vote-by-mail initiative will make it so there's more momentum in the future behind increasing access to absentee voting by loosening the current restrictions.

Bob Kern, a Democrat running in District 98, said the vote-by-mail option is more convenient for many voters, but comes with a major downside.

"I think it makes it easier to vote," Kern said. "But then again, it makes it easier to commit voter fraud."

There is no evidence that mail-in voting is more fraudulent than voting in person.

Kern said the state ought to consider online voting where the voter would be present on a screen so "virtual poll workers" would be able to match the person voting to their identification card.

However, Breaux — a staunch supporter of vote-by-mail — said she has found no evidence of an increase in voter fraud created by the practice. Instead, she said it makes it easier for marginalized voters to take part in democracy.

"Even outside of the pandemic, it makes much more sense," Breaux said. "It's easier, and there are fewer barriers and obstructions and hurdles that you have to jump through."

Beyond 2020, public officials will need to have a plan in place for when it isn't safe to gather crowds of people at voting sites.

Although voters in some states are already accustomed to voting by mail, Pryor thinks this will be a good test run for Indiana to expand mail-in voting.

"I don't think people need to be putting their lives on the line to vote," she said.

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.

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Marion County begins phase 3 of reopening

By **BREANNA COOPER**
BreannaC@indyrecorder.com

Marion County will begin phase three of the reopening plan, which will allow more industries and houses of worship to operate at a higher capacity, Mayor Joe Hogsett announced in a May 27 press conference.

Starting June 1, restaurants will be able to operate at 50% capacity, including indoor seating options. Gyms and non-contact sports facilities will also be able to operate at 50% capacity, as long as exercise equipment is spaced out by at least 10 feet, and staff must wear face masks. Hair and nail salons and tattoo parlors will be allowed to open by appointment only, and both staff and patrons will be required to wear a face mask. Non-essential retail businesses will now be able to open at 75% capacity.

Houses of worship can operate at 50% capacity indoors, and those older than 2 years old must wear a face mask. There is no limit on how many people can attend outdoor services. Campgrounds and summer day camps will be allowed to open as long as social distancing is enforced.

Dr. Virginia Caine, director of the Marion County Public Health Department, said the numbers support this next phase of reopening, citing a decrease in emergency room visits, hospitalizations, deaths and positive COVID-19 tests over the past month. “Please wear a face covering while in public,”

Caine said during the press conference. “Do the personal things you can do to protect yourself and your loved ones. Practice frequent handwashing, stay six feet apart and practice social distancing.”

Caine explained public gatherings are limited to 50 people or fewer, but recommends those who are immunocompromised, have underlying health issues or are older than 65 stay home as much as possible.

“Stay safe out there, do the right thing,” Caine urged. “Be patriotic.”

Throughout the third phase, movie theaters, live entertainment venues, bars and nightclubs will remain closed. Caine said these businesses will not reopen until the fourth phase.

Hogsett announced the city is rolling out a new initiative to provide masks for Indianapolis families. By visiting indy.gov/masks, you can request washable, reusable masks for you and your family. Hogsett said they hope to begin delivering the masks within the next 30 days, with the help of community partnerships that will include pickup locations throughout the city.

“We earned these steps to reopen, now we must do our part to keep Indianapolis open,” Hogsett said. Regarding those who don’t believe COVID-19 is a threat or that masks are unnecessary, Hogsett said, “you’re simply wrong.”

Paul Babcock, director of the Office of Public Health and Safety, said the masks are coming from a United States-based source which has yet to be

finalized. The office is currently negotiating the best price for the city and ensuring they have access to the amount of masks needed to support the need in Indianapolis.

While the number of positive COVID-19 cases in Indianapolis has decreased, Caine also reminded people about testing sites at Warren Central High School and Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Caine is confident the new testing sites will help the health department meet its testing benchmarks. There is now an added emphasis on contact tracing and active case monitoring. Compared to other states, she said, Indiana is making significant progress in the fight against COVID-19.

While Hogsett has been a bit more cautious than Gov. Eric Holcomb when it comes to his reopening plan, he is confident his plan will keep Indianapolis residents safe.

“We will get through this,” Hogsett said. “Get a mask and wear a mask. [This weekend] was a stark reminder of why we’re taking these precautions. Our nation’s flag flew at half-staff to memorialize an unprecedented 100,000 Americans who have lost their lives to COVID-19. That is a staggering number.”

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

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EDITORIAL

Living in a state of constant rage

By OSEYE BOYD



“To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time.” James Baldwin wrote those words decades ago. Quoting Baldwin in this space feels like *deja vu*, but that sentence bears repeating. Baldwin’s words are more poignant than ever and continue to resonate because here we are again.

The words came to me as I watched a video of a white woman feigning fear as she called the police on a Black man when she was the one who broke the law. The words came to me as I read the story of a white woman who said two Black men abducted and killed her son when she actually drowned the boy. Those words kept coming to me as I watched a video of another Black man being killed by someone sworn to uphold and protect the law.

Here. We. Are. Again.

We are once again reeling from the death of an unarmed Black person at the hands of the police. We are once again trying to understand how to make sense of senselessness. And, I’m enraged.

Like so many Black men and women before him George Floyd didn’t have to die.

Floyd died after a police officer used his knee to pin Floyd for eight minutes. For eight full minutes one person held down another person by keeping a knee on another’s neck. Rightfully, this police officer and three others involved in the incident were fired. However, I’d like to know how this officer thought his actions were appropriate. The answer is simple: Floyd’s humanity was lost on the cop since the system is set up as us versus them.

The officer who pinned Floyd by the neck was white, but honestly, I would be just as angry if the officer was Black, Latinx or Asian. For me, this isn’t about the race of the cop as much as it is the system in which the officer operates and the race of the man who died. The system is unjust toward Black

people, and the people who operate in it have a duty to rectify it.

But that rarely happens. Instead, we’re asked to believe a system created by fallible people is somehow infallible.

As per the usual, the Police Officers Federation of Minneapolis in a statement asked people not to rush to judgment. Where is this request for grace for the victims? Instead Black victims are blamed, maligned and scrutinized. He or she was “no angel” is the common refrain. Next come questions about why we don’t protest killings in our communities. We do, but because Black people are invisible it goes unnoticed. We can protest both, by the way, but civilians aren’t police officers who are charged with upholding the law. Police officers stand apart because they’re supposed to live by a different code of ethics.

It’s been several years since Kap protested police brutality by taking a knee during the national anthem. Instead of understanding Colin Kaepernick’s protest many in white America got bent out of shape and refused to listen. Where is the All Lives Matter crowd

now? They’re so quick to retort All Lives Matter when we say Black Lives Matter as if we said only Black Lives Matter. All lives don’t matter until Black lives do, which was the whole point. But nuance isn’t America’s *forté*.

The Kap protestors and All Lives Matter crowd and so many others are silent and oblivious to what it’s like to be Black in America.

We are angry. We are frustrated. We are exasperated. We are scared. We are hurt.

Living in a country where you have to prove your humanity and you deserve to be treated as such takes a toll on your mental health — collectively and individually. Our humanity was stripped from us the moment we became chattel, and we’ve been fighting to get it back ever since. It seems to be a losing battle. The soldiers are weary, but I know we will never give up.

“To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time.”

Maybe one day these words won’t ring true.

OPINIONS

Remembering the ‘other’ university shooting

By LARRY SMITH



May 4 of this year marked the 50th anniversary of the National Guard killing four students and injuring nine others at Ohio’s Kent State University.

The incident, which happened just weeks after I was born, is commemorated each year with solemn observances and multiple media retellings. We usually hear firsthand accounts from people who were there.

I was familiar with the “Kent State Massacre” long before I understood its antecedent (i.e., the Vietnam War). That’s not surprising given that the victims were white. That fact all but ensures that this story will be told and re-told in perpetuity.

By contrast, I didn’t learn about the police shooting of students at Mississippi’s Jackson State University, known then as Jackson State College, until I was in college myself.

The disproportionality in media coverage of tragic events is one of the many confounding aspects of racial inequality in America. Whether it’s the

wall-to-wall reporting of missing white youth as opposed to African American youth, health disparities in Black communities or other phenomena, media coverage (which is a major component of what becomes the historical record) lags far behind when it comes to our issues.

The exception, of course, is the saturation of the news cycle vis-à-vis crimes that African Americans commit — or are alleged to have committed.

Journalist Tim Spofford wrote the only book about the Jackson State incident. Called “Lynch Street: The May 1970 Slayings at Jackson State College,” the book was released in 1988 and offers insight into the context and precipitating factors that led to the shooting. The two main factors that fueled the deadly confrontation were the escalation of the Vietnam War and the long-simmering racial tensions in Mississippi. (Incidentally, Lynch Street was named after John R. Lynch, who had been a Black congressman during Reconstruction.)

Regarding the first issue, President Richard Nixon had expanded the war into nearby Cambodia, which was a neutral country (i.e., it didn’t choose sides during the Vietnam conflict). On the evening prior to the shooting,

students had threatened to burn down the campus’ ROTC building.

Regarding the second issue, Mississippi was (and remains) one of the nation’s hotbeds of racism. This includes the notorious white supremacist attitude that pervaded law enforcement ranks.

The Jackson State incident occurred just after midnight on May 15, mere days after the one at Kent State, but it receives far less coverage (then and now). The shooting victims at Jackson State, which is an HBCU, are Black. That fact all but ensures that this story will not be as well known.

Roughly 100 Black students had gathered on Lynch Street, which bisects the Jackson State campus, on May 14. The group reportedly threw rocks at white motorists who were driving down Lynch Street, which was frequently a site of racial unrest. By late evening, the students had started fires and overturned cars following a false rumor about the death of Charles Evers, a civil rights leader and brother of Medgar Evers.

Firefighters arrived at the scene, followed a short time later by at least 75 police units from the city and the Mississippi Highway Patrol. The firefighters left the scene shortly before mid-

night, leading the police to disperse the crowd that had collected in front of Alexander Hall — a women’s dormitory.

Shortly after midnight, police officers opened fire on the residence hall, claiming that they were being fired upon by a sniper from the building. (After an investigation, the FBI found no evidence of a shooter.)

Students said they had done nothing to provoke the officers. The gunfire lasted for roughly 30 seconds, and more than 460 shots were fired by a reported 40 state highway patrolmen. The students scattered and several people were trampled and/or cut due to the falling glass.

All the windows on the side of the building facing Lynch Street were shattered. Visitors to the campus can still see bullet holes in the façade of Alexander Hall.

When the smoke cleared, witnesses found that two young people had been shot to death. One victim was Phillip Lafayette Gibbs, age 21, who was a junior at Jackson State. The other victim was James Earl Green, age 17, who was a senior at a local high school.

No official was ever prosecuted — or even arrested — following the shootings at Jackson State.

Understanding and enjoying hip-hop with my Generation Z daughter

By JONATHAN BIRDSONG



As a lifelong hip-hop head, even as an adult, I keep an “ear to the street.”

Though the artists I grew up on aren’t as celebrated with the platform and radio spins that this era of rap is blessed with, the sonic culture of beats, rhymes and life that they helped usher in still motivate and inspire my day-to-day actions.

However, as a parent my “ears” are sometimes given a great pause, as I actually listen to what today’s artists are saying. Raising an impressionable teenage daughter comes with its discerning moments. Properly navigating eye rolls and talking the birds and the bees are par for the course.

I was once a rebellious Gen Xer, counter-culture-seeking youth, too. Before Jay-Z became the PG-13 version we hear now, and Drake a universal hitmak-

er, my collection of tapes and CDs was filled with a diversified offering of temporal music.

The Golden-era emcees like Big Daddy Kane and Rakim, most of us vibed with due to their lyrical smoothness and ability to bring street themes and community concerns to light through record. LL Cool J brought great, infectious, jump-off-stage energy. And lyrically he was just as strong — no matter how indifferent you feel about “Pink Cookies In A Plastic Bag Getting Crushed By Buildings.”

From Public Enemy to N.W.A. to even the Rawkus era, hip-hop music has always offered a balancing act between what was artfully good taste versus what was just a hot-for-the-minute song for the club going multitude. And if a record label tried to push anything “whack,” the artist policed their community accordingly, something 50 Cent and Eminem and the like were notoriously known for.

Still, everything had its time and place. And without being too hypocritical, or venturing into any mind frame that promotes censorship, the often explicit and volatile sounds of Tupac, Eazy-E and DJ Quik were played with a filter. Loud, but always seemingly respectful in regards to when, where and whom may be around listening. At least out of my radio.

Commercially appealing groups like Run-DMC fought for radio play. Even with their suburban viability and presence on MTV, both R&B heavy and mainstream radio stations gave much of their music a halt. The term “raising hell” threw off many a radio programmer back in the day, I suppose.

But that’s not today’s radio, which seemingly placates to the sex, drugs and clout chasing nature of fame. Not lyricism. Not the empowering voice of the youth wanting to be heard.

As a Generation X-born parent — one that scoffed at C. Delores Tucker and Tipper Gore’s one-time campaigns against rap and hip-hop music — I cannot allow myself to be overly sanctimonious either. Yes, Too Short made a career (and took a lot of my money) off of one word, but to shun Megan Thee

Stallion for her openness and raunchy-style persona would most certainly be contradictory to my feelings on entertainment as a whole. Even Madonna and Marilyn Monroe created a niche for themselves using sexuality, lest we forget. And as a parent, if I let TV or social media raise my child, or give an impression without adding my two cents or at least have a conversation about the difference between positive hip-hop culture and what’s just plain rap, then I’ve failed.

Like James Bond, I’ll never fail at that.

There’s over 45-plus years of hip-hop culture ingrained in everything from movies to commercials on TV. Though much was campaigned and fought for by the forefathers of rap, social accountability of what’s being said on the airwaves now lies in the hands to the purveyors of commercialism: corporation America, largely.

It lies within the hands of the carrying fans, too. However, I’m a parent first. So, honestly, when I listen to today’s rap, I am starkly reminded of how the imperfectness of my era’s rap has been exploited.

Lil 1/2 Dead and Mr. Short Khop didn’t exactly drop classics in their day either. But their one hit song remains as just that one hit song, not 20 zillion Spotify streams.

There will always be over-the-top acts. So, when my kid asks if I’ve have heard the new Cardi B., and the answer of “no” is already protruding from my face before the words can come out of mouth, and after we’ve had our “Generation X meets Generation Z” conversation on what the song may potentially be about — ‘cause we know it’s going to be risqué — instead of instantly hating, we listen together.

And I retort, “Well, kid, have you heard the new Rapsody?”

We have to hear both.

Jonathan Birdsong is a co-host of Crossroads Sports podcast and pop-culture enthusiast. Contact him at jonathan_e_birdsong@yahoo.com.

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Pandemic brings years of health care disparities to the forefront

By LISA FITCH
NNPA

Dr. Maulana Karenga, chair of the Department of Africana Studies at CSU Long Beach, wants the Black community to make sure that physical distancing during the pandemic does not interfere with relationships or establishing networks.

“We’ve got to shop for each other. We have to pick up prescriptions for each other,” Karenga said. “We’ve got to talk; we’ve got to share information, so we don’t have to be afraid unnecessarily.”

Karenga was recently featured on the Carl Nelson Show and conducted a phone conference with Nelson and his radio audience at WOL radio in Washington, D.C.

“There’s no real denying of the damage and destruction that this coronavirus has done to our lives,” Karenga said. “We can’t even worship in the same way anymore.”

During the show, Karenga admitted that there is a lot of fear and confusion out in the world now, and he warned against buying into the conspiracy theories which can pit persons against each other. He also expressed his dismay with the information the government issues to the public.

“They don’t have culturally competent messages for us,” Karenga said, claiming that at least 46% of coronavirus victims are Black. “Even though Black people are in the emerging hot zones ... Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, New Orleans ...we lack the ethnic data. Who’s tested positive? Who has died? We don’t have any of that.”

The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) has called for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to collect and report racial data for COVID-19. As of April 8, only nine states and the District of Columbia released data based on race.

Former President Barack Obama agreed, raising the issue at a virtual meeting with mayors, local leaders and members of response teams from around the world.

“When you start looking at issues of domestic abuse and you start looking



Dr. Maulana Karenga (Photo courtesy The Final Call/Andrea Muhammad.)

at racial disparities that are popping up in your cities, paying attention to that is the kind of leadership I know all of you aspire to,” Obama said. “You have to be intentional about these issues.”

Los Angeles County released figures amid a national conversation on how COVID-19 is affecting racial groups differently. The city’s racial breakdown of coronavirus deaths shows the majority of people who died were white or Latino. However, Black people accounted for a disproportionate 17% of the deaths while making up only 9% of the county’s population.

Across the nation, the numbers reveal similar racial disparities. Blacks are at greater risk, mostly because many have a greater burden of disease. The problem is especially acute in Louisiana, Illinois and Michigan. In Louisiana, 70% of people who died were Black, but African Americans make up only a third of the population.

“It’s not that [Blacks are] getting infected more often,” said Dr. Anthony Fauci during a recent White House briefing. “It’s that when they do get infected with their underlying medical conditions — diabetes, hypertension, obesity, asthma — those are the kind of things that wind them up in the ICU and ultimately death.”

Fauci says the pandemic is shining a bright light on the health care disparities which have always existed in the country and added that efforts to limit these disparities should resume after this global crisis.

“Many of the social structures in our country have long placed African Americans in disadvantageous positions,” said Dr. Marjorie Innocent, senior director of NAACP Health Programs in a recent teleconference. “At the same time, African Americans are more likely not to have regular sources of health care and tend to rely far too much on emergency center care.”

NAACP Director of Environmental and Climate Justice, Jacqui Patters, noted that the most vulnerable and most marginalized populations often end up falling through the cracks during an emergency.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom said he was wary of publicizing incomplete information, as not every health facility was completing demographic information.

Last week, County Supervisor Herb Wesson penned a letter to fellow board members and Dr. Barbara Ferrer, the director of the county’s Department of Public Health.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is presenting many compelling challenges. An important challenge is transparency in the reporting of data on how this pandemic is impacting communities and ethnic groups in Los Angeles County.

“It is vital that while our emergency public health mobilization gathers momentum that we have the needed data that is key to understanding the impact and the response that is aimed at addressing the crisis.

“This data is critical to the effective deployment of needed resources and the shaping of public education and communications, particularly in communities of color. It is also vital for the purpose of accountability.

“More specifically, I am requesting data including, but not limited to, a break down by ethnic groups related to rates of death, the number of tests, the results of those tests, the number of those in quarantine and the data on individuals who have tested positive and have recovered. I am also requesting that this information be included with the Public Health Department’s regular updates.”

The message was received during one of the recent briefings where Ferrer noted that the ethnic data was often not filled in on the forms that the county collected for daily statistics during the crisis, but that the department would do its best to get the requested data. Data from April 9, there were 7,574 laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 384 of them were Black. There were 212 deaths and 23 of them were African American.

Homemade Cloth Face Coverings Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, such as the grocery store or pharmacy. The Marion County Public Health Department is urging this due to the significant community-based transmission of COVID-19.

While maintaining social distancing of 6 feet is critical and remains important to slowing the spread of the virus, the use of simple cloth face coverings is intended to slow the spread and help people who may have the virus – and do not know it – from transmitting it to others.

Cloth face coverings made from household items or common materials at low cost are an additional public health measure to protect the community.

These face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or a person who is unable to remove it without assistance.

The recommended cloth face coverings are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders.

Cloth face coverings should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face, be secured with ties or ear loops, include multiple layers of fabric, allow for breathing without restriction, and be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.

Should cloth face coverings be washed or otherwise cleaned regularly? Yes. They should be routinely washed depending on the frequency of use.

How does one safely sterilize/clean a cloth face covering? A washing machine should suffice in properly washing a cloth face covering.

How does one safely remove a used cloth face covering? Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when

removing their cloth face covering and wash hands immediately after removing.

This recommendation does not replace the President’s Coronavirus Guidelines for America, 30 Days to Slow the Spread, which remains the cornerstone of our national effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

CDC will make additional recommendations as the evidence regarding appropriate public health measures.

To learn more on how to make a cloth face covering, visit [CDC.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

Social Distancing during COVID-19

Limiting face-to-face contact with others is still the best way to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The term “social distancing” has become a normal part of life right now; it means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home.

As a reminder, the recommendations for social distancing:

- Stay at least 6 feet from other people
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings

In addition to everyday steps to prevent COVID-19, keeping space between you and others is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to this virus and slowing its spread in Marion County.

Everyone should limit close contact with individuals outside your household in indoor and outdoor spaces. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay away from others when possible, even if you have no symptoms.

Social distancing is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

More information about COVID-19 is available at [CDC.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) and [MarionHealth.org](https://www.MarionHealth.org).



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Officials: 2 church services sources of virus outbreaks

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER
and DAISY NGUYEN

LOS ANGELES (AP) — As Gov. Gavin Newsom prepares to release plans for how religious institutions can reopen in California during the coronavirus pandemic, health officials announced that two church services that were held without authorization have been sources of outbreaks.

Mendocino County public health officials said May 24 that six more people who participated in a Mother's Day service at Assembly of God Church in Redwood Valley contracted the virus, raising the number of cases to nine and making the outbreak responsible for a third of local infections.

Meanwhile, Butte County health officials said two of 180 people who attended a Mother's Day church service in Oroville have tested positive for COVID-19. They said a recent spike in local cases, mostly in the Oroville area, indicate increased community spread.

Newsom was expected to provide plans May 25 on reopening churches.

Some places of worship around the country opened their doors over the weekend after President Donald Trump declared such places essential and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released guidelines for reopening faith organizations.

Newsom has taken a more cautious approach: Last week, many counties in California had received approval to reopen businesses including retail shops and restaurants as permitted in the second phase of his plan to restart the state economy. Churches are not allowed to reopen until the plan's third phase.

The approach has angered opponents who claim that California's rules to stop the spread of the virus violate religious freedoms. Many had already announced they would violate the state order and hold in-person services on Pentecost.

A Pentecostal church in San Diego sued to reopen immediately, but lost its appeal when the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Newsom's ban on in-person services. In a split ruling, a court panel found that government's emergency powers override what in normal times would be fundamental constitutional rights.

Stay-at-home restrictions have eased across much of the state, which has seen a decline in COVID-19 hospitalizations. Some 47 of 58 counties have received permission to move deeper into the second of Newsom's four-phase reopening by meeting state standards for controlling the virus.

In the mountain resort community of Big Bear Lake, a steady stream of out-of-town visitors stopped at the Copper Q cafe on May 24 to pick up to-go coffee and baked goods. The city in San Bernardino County northeast of Los Angeles announced last week that it would not enforce Newsom's safety orders, arguing it has kept COVID-19 cases manageable and there has been significant economic harm.

"It's not packed, but the crowds are decent," Copper Q manager Ashley Coleman said. "People are keeping their distance, and everyone's wearing masks of course."

Many Southern California beaches were open only for swimming, running and other activities. Sunbathing and group activities such as volleyball were prohibited.

Los Angeles County waterfronts saw lighter crowds than anticipated during the first weekend that officials announced reopened bike paths and some seaside parking lots, Department of Beaches and Harbor spokeswoman Nicole Mooradian said.

Los Angeles County park officials shut access to Eaton Canyon north of Pasadena Sunday afternoon, however, after seeing "overwhelming crowds" who were not following public health guidelines.

Social distancing practices have been cited as the main reason rates of deaths and hospitalizations have slowed in many counties. People were urged to keep their masks on and their guard up while enjoying recently reopened bike paths, hiking trails and beaches.

"It's nice outside. That doesn't mean (hashtag)COVID19 has gone away. Wash your hands. Stay 6 feet apart. Wear a face covering. Be smart. Your actions can literally save lives," Newsom tweeted.

Many families flocked to San Francisco's Baker Beach to enjoy the sunny weather and spectacular view of the Golden Gate Bridge. Sara Stewart, 27, said that as the beach got more crowded, she retreated to a

See VIRUS B2 ►



Members of the It Is Well praise team (left-right) Pastor Beverly Barney, minister Carmencita Hughes and Clarissa Wright sing "Way Maker."

Rapture ready: New beginnings

It Is Well Church Ministries recently returned to the Jewel Center for church service in the parking lot. "It is a blessing to have a live Sunday service," Pastor Beverly Barney said. "Because of the coronavirus we've had to conduct all our services online. It's like a new beginning."



Minster Danny Bradon shares a New Testament scripture with the congregation.



Angel Hutcherson (left) and Ann Grigsby practice social distancing.



By popular request (right) deacon John Hurst sings his soon-to-be released single, "To God Be The Glory."



Pastor Reginald Barney asked, "Are you rapture ready?" Barney's sermon came from the Book of Revelation. (Photos/Curtis Guynn)

Memorial Day weekend vigil for accident victims



Kashonna Brown, mother of Kierra (left), stands with the rest of her family during the vigil.



More than 100 family members and friends gathered on the grassy area outside of Purpose of Life Church for a prayer vigil for Kierra Brown, 15, Tyjiana Velez, 13, and David Evans, 15. The three teenagers were killed two weeks ago in a vehicle collision at North Kessler Boulevard and Nobscot Drive near West 38th Street and I-65.

Family and friends released lavender and white balloons at the end of the prayer vigil. (Photos/Curtis Guynn)

SPIRITUAL OUTLOOK

Pan-African mothers’ fight for life before and during COVID-19

By ANGELIQUE WALKER-SMITH

“[S]he took him [Moses] to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son.”

Exodus 2:10a



The disproportion-ate numbers of illnesses and deaths related to COVID-19 in the Pan-African community are alarming. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that one-third of those hospitalized with the virus in the United States are of African descent. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports a 43% jump of reported COVID-19 cases in Africa. They warn that Africa is poised to become the next epicenter of the virus. Despite this — and despite the historic inequities that have contributed to this — Pan-African mothers are fighting for life.

But this fight is not new as we especially appreciate mothers this month. The deliverance story in Exodus illustrates this. This story begins with mothers and midwives in the first chapter. Biblical scholars say that it could have been Egyptian women or Israelite women who were the midwives. In either case, they resisted the government policy of killing male Israelite babies and jeopardizing the lives of mothers (Exodus 1:15-17).

Exodus 2:1-10 builds on this spirit of resilience and courage. Here the biological mother of Moses, Jochebed; her daughter, Miriam; and his adopted Egyptian mother, Bityah, fight together for the life of Moses. Life is saved because of the refusal of the mothers, joined by Jochebed’s daughter, to accept the unjust policies of Bityah’s father, Pharaoh. Moses’ life is spared for future years when Bityah adopts Moses and raises him as her son, thereby making him an African prince of Egypt.

This extraordinary commitment

to life has and is exhibited by mothers throughout the world. But in the case of Pan-African mothers, this has been further challenged by the combined societal biases of race, ethnicity and gender. This was also seen in the Exodus narrative when Moses’ Ethiopian wife, Zipporah, experienced this among the Israelite people (Numbers 12:1-12).

The bitter fruit of systems and attitudes of colonialism, racism and gender biases remain with us —before COVID-19 and now. Such systems and attitudes summon us to a faith response that cries out for equitable public policies and a deeper spiritual understanding of what it means to live out love for and with all of our neighbors.

This response invites us to fight for life with our Pan-African mothers. These mothers are essential workers fighting for life on the frontlines of health care and farming; bringing and retailing food at grocery stores; and caring for children, families and elderly in caretaker institutions and in their own homes. Many are faith leaders — with or without clergy profile.

Bread for the World is committed to fighting for life with Pan-African mothers and all mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This fight includes advocating together to end hunger and to address hunger-related issues. Please join our upcoming Pan African Consultation during Bread for the World’s virtual Advocacy Summit on June 8 to learn how you can help.

Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith is senior associate for Pan-African and Orthodox church engagement at Bread for the World in Washington, D.C.

BIBLE TRIVIA



By WILSON CASEY

ANSWERS:

1) Old; 2) Sisera; 3) Zebedee;

Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson’s Casey’s latest book, “Test Your Bible Knowledge,” available in bookstores and online.

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VIRUS

► Continued from B1

sand dune to get away from people.

“People were trying their hardest to socially distance, but the more and more crowded it got, the harder it was,” Stewart said.

Volunteers patrolled Dolores Park to offer masks and ensure people were staying in large chalk “social distancing” circles drawn on the grass to show people where to sit. The park has seen large masses of people on sunny weekends, prompting Mayor London Breed to warn that she would shut it down if people weren’t more responsible.

Not everyone rushed to enjoy the outdoors. Several hundred protesters rallied outside Los Angeles City Hall on May 24 and outside the state Capitol in Sacramento on May 23 to demand that Newsom fully lift his restrictions on businesses, religious gatherings and other activities.

Los Angeles County, the state’s largest with 10 million people, is not planning to reopen more widely until the next summer holiday, July 4th, because it has a disproportionately large share of the state’s coronavirus cases and can’t meet even new, relaxed state standards for allowing

additional businesses and recreational activities.

The county has been hardest-hit by COVID-19, with more than 44,000 cases and nearly 2,100 deaths.

California has close to 93,000 confirmed cases and nearly 3,800 deaths, state health officials said.

The state is still seeing troubling COVID-19 flare-ups. More than 150 employees at a Farmer John meat-packing plant in Vernon, an industrial city five miles south of downtown Los Angeles, contracted the coronavirus. Imperial County, across the border from Mexico, has seen a surge. Two inmates from the California Institution for Men in San Bernardino County died May 24 from what appear to be complications related to COVID-19, raising the death toll to nine, state corrections officials said.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

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NFL announces major steps to incentivize teams to hire minorities for top posts

By **STACY M. BROWN**
NNPA Newswire Senior Correspondent

National Football League teams must now interview at least two minority candidates for head coaching positions under new resolutions that the league hopes will improve diversity among its 32 teams.

In an expansion of its Rooney Rule, which had previously called on teams to interview minority candidates, the league said teams must also interview at least one minority candidate for coordinator openings and one external candidate for positions in teams' front offices.

"While we have seen positive strides in our coaching ranks over the years aided by the Rooney Rule, we recognize, after the last two seasons, that we can and must do more," Commissioner Roger Goodell said during a media conference call.

"The policy changes made today are bold and demonstrate the commitment of our ownership to increase diversity in leadership positions throughout the league."

Troy Vincent, the NFL's executive vice president of football operations and second-in-command to Goodell, said the league is now in a better position to not only hire minorities and women but to retain their services.

"What the chairman (Art Rooney II)



Troy Vincent, the NFL's executive vice president of football operations.

and the commissioner did today and what the ownership voted on today has been a fight for decades to get mobility that has disproportionately affected people of color," Vincent stated.

"Just the ability to get an interview, you don't get hired unless you have an interview. The mobility resolution today was significant and historic, because it has been a fight for decades. That's the foundation. Frankly, we would call that the linchpin of these inequalities. With these initiatives, the enhancement of the Rooney Rule, which is a tool; it just allows us to

have a broader scope of how we look at things."

The new rules include a provision that begins in 2021, which states that teams will no longer restrict staff from interviewing with other clubs for "bona fide" coaching or front office positions. Goodell called the commitment to improving diversity throughout the league "critical" for future success.

"While we have seen positive strides in our coaching ranks over the years aided by the Rooney Rule, we recognize, after the last two seasons, that we can and must do more," Goodell said.

"The policy changes made today are bold and demonstrate the commitment of our ownership to increase diversity in leadership positions throughout the league."

Clubs also will be required to "include minorities and, or, female applicants in the interview processes for senior-level front office positions such as club president and senior executives in communications, finance, human resources, legal, football operations, sales, marketing, sponsorship, information technology, and security positions," according to the expanded rule.

Also, league officials stated that they would use an advisory panel to further strategies aimed at fostering an inclusive culture of opportunity both on and off the field.

Goodell also promised to improve the league's pipeline for minority coaching and player personnel candidates with assistance from its Bill Walsh NFL Diversity Coaching Fellowship.

"This fight has been going on for a long time," said Vincent, who could one day become the league's first African American commissioner.

"The facts are we have a broken system, and we're looking to implement things to change the direction in where we're going, and it's been south. Not a gradual south but a direct south."

How to pay rent when you can't afford it

By **MELISSA LAMBARENA**
NerdWallet

After Megan Pearson's job as a restaurant server was put on hold because of COVID-19-related stay-at-home orders, the single mom had to figure out how to come up with the rent for her apartment in Brooklyn, New York.

"I posted my frustration on Facebook with trying to get through to unemployment the first week," Pearson says. "I probably made 200 phone calls before I got it all settled."

Uncertain whether assistance would arrive on time or at all, Pearson created a crowdfunding account at the encouragement of a friend. This bought her time and ultimately allowed her to stay in her apartment without taking on expensive debt.

If you're scrambling to make rent, consider the following steps before resorting to high-interest loans.

EXPLORE FREE OPTIONS

Some states have banned evictions during the COVID-19 crisis, but you're still responsible for paying rent. The first step is to reevaluate your budget and "find" money where you can.

Cut back on nonessential expenses, lower 401(k) contributions, reach out to creditors for assistance and seek low-income programs for food and utilities, suggests Jeffrey Arevalo, a financial wellness expert with nonprofit credit counseling agency GreenPath.

Other options that cost nothing or close to it:

— Applying for unemployment or other assistance programs. Pearson expects she'll cover future rent payments with unemployment and coronavirus stimulus money.

— Talk to your landlord. Ask for time until a check arrives. You could also request an installment plan or waived late fees. Your landlord might be willing to help, especially if you have a history of paying on time. Whatever terms are negotiated, get them in writing.

— Call 211. Local nonprofits and religious organiza-

tions may offer rental assistance. United Way helps access those services upon calling 211. Resources may be limited during national emergencies, however.

— Apply for grants in your industry. Pearson applied for a grant from the Restaurant Strong Fund, which helps restaurant workers affected by COVID-19 closures, though she has not yet heard back.

— Ask for help from family or friends. Pearson raised \$3,995 toward rent and essential expenses via the GoFundMe crowdfunding platform. "If you don't ask, no one knows you need it," Pearson says.

— If your lease permits, consider subletting your apartment or a room. Or move in with a loved one and help each other by divvying up rent costs. Again, talk to your landlord to see what's negotiable.

— Seek professional advice. Currently, GreenPath Financial Wellness is offering free phone-based financial counseling during the pandemic.

LEAN ON INVESTMENTS

Typically, it isn't advisable to dip into money that's meant for your future, but these aren't typical times.

If you have a taxable brokerage account, consider selling stocks. Another option might be a withdrawal from a 401(k) or individual retirement account, says Andrew Rosen, financial advisor and partner at Diversified, a financial planning firm.

Under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act those under age 59½ years impacted physically or financially by COVID-19 can withdraw up to \$100,000 from an eligible 401(k) or IRA through Dec. 31, 2020, without the usual 10% early withdrawal penalty. The tax bill is spread over the next three years, and you can claim a tax refund if you pay it back before that time. If you've lost your job, roll over your 401(k) to an IRA and then make a withdrawal, Rosen suggests.

The CARES Act also lets qualifying 401(k) plan participants borrow their vested balance up to \$100,000 as a loan. And in emergencies unrelated to COVID-19, a loan on a 401(k) — if available through

your employer — avoids penalties, taxes and a credit check.

If you are truly drowning in debt and rent is just one of many financial obligations you're unable to meet, you may want to consider other options.

"Most people don't realize that generally speaking, your retirement accounts are protected in a bankruptcy," Rosen says.

CHOOSE THE LEAST EXPENSIVE HIGH-INTEREST DEBT

Without sufficient income or good credit (typically a FICO score of at least 690), you may be left with only high-interest financing options. Consider the following, in order from least to most expensive:

— Borrow against your existing credit card's limit. The Citi Flex Loan and My Chase Loan let you borrow against your card's credit limit with a fixed interest rate and term. The money is deposited into a bank account without the need for a credit check or origination fee.

— Pay rent with your credit card. Plastiq, for instance, will let you charge your rent to your card and will then cut your landlord a check on your behalf, in exchange for a 2.5% processing fee. Weigh the costs before going this route, and be aware that if you can't pay it back within a billing cycle, you'll incur interest on the rent payment at whatever APR your card charges.

— As a last resort, consider a cash advance. This can offer quick cash up to the amount of your available limit, but you'll pay dearly for it with a steep fee and an interest rate that starts accruing the moment you pull the cash from your bank or ATM. Cash advances could also negatively impact your credit by increasing your credit utilization, a key factor in credit scores. Still, it's likely cheaper than turning to a payday loan, which may not be an option anyway if you are no longer collecting a paycheck.

This article originally appeared on the personal finance website NerdWallet. Melissa Lambarena is a writer at NerdWallet.

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Impact of COVID-19 on homeless population not totally clear

By **TYLER FENWICK**
tylerf@indyrecorder.com

Chris Anthony Leachman knows the toll COVID-19 has had on the homeless population. He's lived it and has seen enough to know he wants no part of it.

He still goes to the men's shelter occasionally but has spent the last four months sleeping outside by Central Library.

"I ain't trying to get too close to people," he said while sitting on a bench outside of the city-county building. "I just stay out here."

Leachman, 38, who's been homeless since shortly before Christmas last year, said he's picky about what food he gets from drop-off locations for fear that it could be contaminated.

He keeps up with the news from his cell phone, which has internet, and whatever he hears in the shelter and at the grocery store when he wanders around.

"It's kinda hard out here because it is out here," Leachman said of the disease. "You got people getting sick. You got a lot of people getting coronavirus."

Beyond anecdotes from the people who are actually living through the COVID-19 pandemic without permanent housing, there isn't a clear, unified picture of how the disease has impacted those experiencing homelessness.

Shelters and other service providers, along with local and state partner agencies, that are part of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) report health screenings, tests administered, positive tests and other metrics, which are tracked by Indianapolis Continuum of Care.

As of May 27, there were 164 positive COVID-19 tests. Most test results were entered by a safe recovery site operated by the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA).

But the data doesn't capture the full impact of COVID-19 on those experiencing homelessness, according to Chelsea Haring-Cozzi, executive director of the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (CHIP), which tracks the data on behalf of Indianapolis Continuum of Care.

That's because there are people who get tested by the health department or at a hospital but never go to the safe recovery site, and the service provider they worked with didn't enter them into the data tracking system.

HMIS has "fairly broad coverage" in Indianapolis, Haring-Cozzi said, but doesn't have 100% participation among shelters and others provided.

At Wheeler Mission Ministries, the largest shelter network in the county, there have been about 16 positive cases among staff and about 30 more among men staying in the shelters, according to William Bumphus, director of the men's shelter.

Those numbers include a shelter in Bloomington, but Bumphus said almost all of the organization's positive cases have come from Indianapolis.

Horizon House, which offers basic needs such as food and water and does street outreach, did not say if any of the people they've served have tested positive, citing privacy concerns.

"However, a number of individuals who have been served by Horizon House over the past 2 months



Chris Anthony Leachman, who has been homeless since shortly before Christmas, sits outside of the city-county building. (Photo/Tyler Fenwick)

have reported COVID-19 symptoms and/or had known exposure to the virus," Leslie Kelley, director of programs, said in a statement.

At Family Promise of Greater Indianapolis, which can serve 30 people at a time, one person had symptoms of COVID-19 but tested negative, according to the shelter's executive director, Mike Chapuran.

The Recorder also reached out to other shelters and service providers but did not get a response.

The county health department doesn't track how many people experiencing homelessness have tested positive.

"To my knowledge, we don't have data on the number of COVID-19 positive cases in the county among the homeless," Curt Brantingham, a spokesperson from the health department, said in an email.

The Recorder also asked the state health department and was told it doesn't have that data.

Shelters and outreach providers are supposed to do a health screening on visitors and contact the county health department if further evaluation is required, Brantingham said.

From there, the health department does further screening to determine if a COVID-19 test is necessary. If so, testing is arranged at the safe recovery site.

The recovery site accepts people experiencing homelessness, as well as victims of domestic violence and others. The FSSA did not immediately respond to a data request.

Keeping track of how many people experiencing homelessness have tested positive for COVID-19 is

difficult, in part, because of people like Leachman who are homeless but don't have much interaction with the shelters.

Amber Ames, executive director of Stopover Inc., which provides emergency shelter and other services to homeless teenagers and young adults, said the organization has simply lost connection with some of its normal clients.

The emergency shelter has room for eight youth ages 12 to 17. Most of those referrals for the shelter, as well as a transitional housing program, come from the school system, though, which hasn't served students in person since mid-March.

"It almost feels like they've gone off the grid a little bit," Ames said.

There haven't been any COVID-19 cases at Stopover Inc. as of May 21, according to Ames, and the emergency shelter is still at capacity.

Whatever toll COVID-19 and the resulting economic collapse have had on the homeless population could become significantly worse in July, when the state's moratorium on evictions is set to expire.

Plus, July is usually when there's a surge in homelessness, Chapuran said.

Tax refunds start running out, landlords are less lenient than they are in the colder winter months, and parents can miss work because they can't find child care with schools out for the summer.

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

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Beech Grove City Schools
Beech Grove Schools Question No. 1
For the eight (8) calendar years immediately following the holding of the referendum, shall Beech Grove City Schools impose a property tax rate that does not exceed fifty-five cents (\$0.55) on each one hundred dollars (\$100) of assessed valuation and that is in addition to all other property taxes imposed by the school corporation for the purpose (a) repealing the existing referendum fund tax levy, and (b) replacing the existing referendum fund tax levy with a new referendum fund tax levy that will provide for the purpose of retaining teachers and support staff, securing safe transportation, purchasing new buses, enhancing student safety, maintaining buildings and providing other educational and operational needs of the school corporation?"
Beech Grove Schools Question No. 2
"Shall Beech Grove City Schools issue bonds or enter into a lease to finance the 2020 Early Childhood, Safety, Security & Efficiency Project, which includes the renovation of and improvements to community facilities, including Beech Grove High School, Middle School, Central Elementary School, and Hornet Park Elementary School, including site improvements, and the construction of the Hornet Park Early Childhood Learning Center located at Hornet Park Elementary, which is estimated to cost not more than \$17,500,000 and is estimated to increase the property tax rate for debt service by a maximum of twenty-five cents (\$0.25) per \$100 of assessed valuation?"
MSD Washington Township
MSD Washington Township Question No. 1
"For the eight (8) calendar years immediately following the holding of the referendum, shall the MSD of Washington Township impose a property tax rate that does not exceed twenty-five cents (\$0.25) on each one hundred dollars (\$100) of assessed valuation and that is in addition to all other property taxes imposed by the school corporation for the purpose (a) repealing the existing referendum fund tax rate with a new referendum fund tax rate that will provide funding improving student safety, increasing student support services, expanding existing academic support programs and retaining teachers and staff?"
MSD Washington Township Question No. 2
"Shall MSD of Washington Township issue bonds or enter into a lease to finance 2020 Safety, Capacity, Efficiency, Technology, Renovation and Construction Project which consists of updating, improving and construction at North Central High School; J. Everett Light Career Center; Eastwood, Northview and Westlane Middle Schools; Hilltop Developmental Preschool; Allisonville, Crooked Creek, Fox Hill, Greenbriar, John Strange, Nora, and Spring Mill Elementary Schools; the Community and Education Center and the construction of additional school district facilities, which is estimated to cost not more than \$285,000,000 and is estimated to increase the property tax rate for debt service by \$0.3172 per \$100 of assessed valuation?"
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Free online conference

"Thinking, Learning & Doing, in the New Normal" a free online conference presented by Kheprw Institute and the Indianapolis Recorder, will be 10 a.m.-2 p.m. May 30. Dr. Jessica Gordon Nembhard, best known for her work "Collective Courage," is the keynote speaker. "Collective Courage" examines how Black communities have used cooperative economics from slavery to today.

The virtual conference includes two breakout sessions that will allow participants to discuss four topics: building local economy, educating and empowering our children, affordable and accessible housing, and creativity and resilience.

The Indianapolis Recorder will facilitate a Q&A session with conference participants after the keynote address.

To participate in the interactive sessions, visit newnormal.kheprw.org. The conference will be livestreamed through the Recorder and Kheprw Facebook pages.

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My longing for the Indy 500 still isn't over

By **DANNY BRIDGES**

Even a dummy like me knows the true meaning of Memorial Day weekend. It's a time to pause and offer respect to all the military personnel who made the ultimate sacrifice for my freedom, which allows me the opportunity to live and type these words today.

Nothing we did this past weekend is as important as paying tribute to those brave individuals who lost their lives while serving this country.

Traditionally in this region, the weekend also plays host to the greatest motor sports event in the world, the Indianapolis 500.

For over 100 years, the famed oval at 16th Street and Georgetown Road has showcased the best that open wheel racing has to offer, and yours truly has worshipped the hallowed grounds since 1969, taking in 50 consecutive races while developing a love for the sport.

However, this year is different, and with the United States firmly in the clutches of a viral pandemic, the race has been rescheduled until Aug. 23, at which time the green flag will hopefully wave again.

Yes, I've done everything possible to get my 500-month-of-May fix but have fallen woefully short. I still miss the sound of souvenir vendors offering up their wares on the grounds as I pull into the track and don't mind admitting I'm still suffering withdrawals from not being able to partake in the legendary fried chicken that racing matriarch Ginny Byrd offers her guests in the Jonathon Byrd Motor Sports hospitality area on race day. Combine that with the comfort of a world class, climate controlled media center equipped with large flat screens and a superb operations staff, and you've got the perfect recipe for a successful racing experience. Throw in a final stroll through the garage area in search of some last minute news and you're ready for the traditional walking along the grid just before the command to start engines, one which despite the sea of humanity you must navigate, still sends me to a place like no other in sports.

By now it's pretty obvious that I'm a racing diehard who would probably go out to IMS and watch them race rickshaws, but my point here is the delay in experiencing these traditions has been painstaking for me, and while the promise of a race in August sounds wonderful, I'm still not certain the aforementioned aura of it all can be duplicated three months later. While I have no doubt Roger Penske and his IMS staff will put on a fabulous show, can the majestic aspect of the month of May be duplicated in an entirely different setting? I'm not so sure. Is it possible that when they release the colorful balloons as part of the traditional pre-race ceremonies that I can simply close my eyes like Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz" and dream there's no place like May again? Can we simply change the calendar and go back 90 days? No, we cannot. In a perfect world a time machine would be set up and I'd simply sit in it and be jettisoned back to the original date and format that I'm so accustomed to, but I'm going to have to come to terms with simply another adjustment needed in these challenging times we live in.

Before concluding this rant about the changes that have impacted the running of the 2020 Indianapolis 500, let me say I realize there are many things far more important than 200 laps around a 2.5-mile sacred oval. Many lives have been lost to this pandemic, and the economic impact is still impacting virtually every person in this country. That clearly puts racing in perspective and actually completely voids the need to run the event at all, let alone in what I have come to know over 50 years as the month of May.

Hopefully, the public health crisis will subside enough to have the race with fans in attendance, and the August weather will not stifle us with oppressive humidity. I also hope the local blackout is lifted to allow all who cannot attend to enjoy the race on television, providing both excellent entertainment and a diversion from the trying times this pandemic has placed upon us all for several months now.

I will no doubt come to terms with the delayed display of tradition this year and hope for a great race, one that just may provide us with a historic moment on the track. So please forgive me for not suppressing my frustrations for the necessary rescheduled date, as I'm clearly a creature of habit who, along with millions of other folks, was raised on the tradition and festivities associated with May.

August will have to do, and if you should bump into me on race day and at the risk of redundancy, I attempt to engage you in a conversation that states it's just not the same as the month of May, feel free to ignore me and please refrain from slapping me hard. After all, I'm an old dog set in his ways and can't afford an injury that might prohibit me from attending the 2021 Indy 500 next May.

Danny Bridges, who was raised on the Indy 500 and just can't help himself, can be reached at 317-370-8447 or at bridgeshd@aol.com.



Entering his first season with the Jets, Frank Gore is feeling fresh and ready to help carry the load with Le'Veon Bell in New York's backfield. (AP Photo/Adrian Kraus, File)

Age-defying Gore still running, excited to help Jets win

By **DENNIS WASZAK Jr.**
AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Frank Gore just keeps running — defying logic and Father Time with each hard-fought yard.

At 37 years old, the star running back is considered ancient in football terms, playing a position at which most guys his age and with his workload would have been long retired.

But Gore is preparing for his 16th NFL season, this one with the New York Jets. He's No. 3 on the league's career rushing list with 15,347 yards, behind only Emmitt Smith and Walter Payton. And, he doesn't believe he's anywhere near finished.

"I really don't think about age," Gore said during a Zoom call May 21. "It's the way I train. I love to stay around younger guys at the position, just to look at myself, to be honest with myself."

Gore has made a career of being a smart, tough runner whose workout regimen impresses all who have coached or played with him. During his 10 years in San Francisco, three in Indianapolis and then one-year stints in Miami and Buffalo, Gore has challenged himself to stay at a high level. And he has been productive at every stop.

With the Jets, he'll likely be behind Le'Veon Bell in a backfield that will also include rookie La'Mical Perine. For a bell-cow back who has led his team in carries every season, that lessened workload will be a bit of a change.

"I'm cool," Gore insisted. "I'm happy to even be playing this game at my age. I'm happy that this organization gave me an opportunity.

But I'm just going to come in here, come work and help all the young guys and show those young guys I still can play."

Gore signed a one-year deal worth \$1.05 million with the Jets recently, reuniting with coach Adam Gase — something the running back said was a major factor in him coming to New York. The two first worked together when Gase was an offensive assistant with the 49ers in 2008. They developed a bond and Gase told Gore if he ever got a head coaching job, he'd love for Gore to play for him.

In 2018, Gase made it happen with the Dolphins. Two years later, they are back together.

"I was 35 and once you touch that 30-mark, guys don't really want to give you an opportunity, give you a chance," Gore said. "He stuck by his word and brought me to Miami. We won some games. ... He's very smart, he's real, and he's a man of his word."

The opportunity to play with quarterback Sam Darnold — "I'm very excited" — on a team with a defense that includes safety Jamal Adams — "I think he's a top safety in this league. I love the way he comes to play every down, every game" — also played roles in Gore choosing the Jets.

Gore has yet to speak with Bell since signing with New York, but insists the two will be fine working in the same backfield. They have known each other for several years, and train in the same area in Florida. Gore also sought out Bell last season after the regular-season finale to get his jersey to frame for his wall.

"I respect his game and I respect the way he prepares himself to get ready for the season," Gore

said. "I've been around a bunch of talented running backs my whole career, even in college, the NFL. I'm going to do whatever it takes to help him, help the other guys and also help the team be successful on Sundays."

Gore is on his third AFC East team in as many seasons; New England's the only squad for which he hasn't played. The Patriots have won 11 straight division titles, but many think that streak could end without Tom Brady at quarterback.

Count Gore among them. "Brady's gone, and it's wide open," he said.

Despite losing playing time last season in Buffalo to rookie Devin Singletary and posting career lows in yards rushing with 599 and yards per carry (3.6), retirement was never part of Gore's plans.

"Because when I was playing the first six or seven games, I was balling," Gore said. "Once Buffalo started playing a younger guy, I felt like I still could do it. I just had to see what team would give me an opportunity."

Gore also got all the reassurance he needed from his oldest son Frank Jr., also a running back who's entering his freshman year at Southern Miss.

"He said, 'I think you could go one more,'" Gore Sr. recalled. "So, I said, all right, I'm going to go."

Just as he has always done. "On the practice field, I'm going to go out there and practice like it's my last," Gore said. "Young guys seeing me pulling it hard every day, it's just going to help our team get even better. So, I'm very excited, I'm a New York Jet and I can't wait to get into the building to see what we can do."