

On the Move

• **RENTERS BEWARE.** Over 50 percent of Black tenants are being ripped off by slumlords. But don't worry, **Karina B. Rodriguez** of Rentpro Consulting and Expediting Service, LLC breaks down your basic bill of rights. —by Souleo



New Lease on Life

Most renter's agreements can only be changed if both parties agree on the terms. So breaking one usually comes at a cost. But there are those—including senior citizens, military personnel and domestic violence victims—who may qualify to terminate without being responsible for future payments.



Check it Out

It can be difficult getting some landlords to address repair concerns once you've already moved in. Before paying any fees or signing a lease, Rodriguez advises all prospective tenants to take a final inspection of the apartment to ensure all initial issues have been handled upfront.



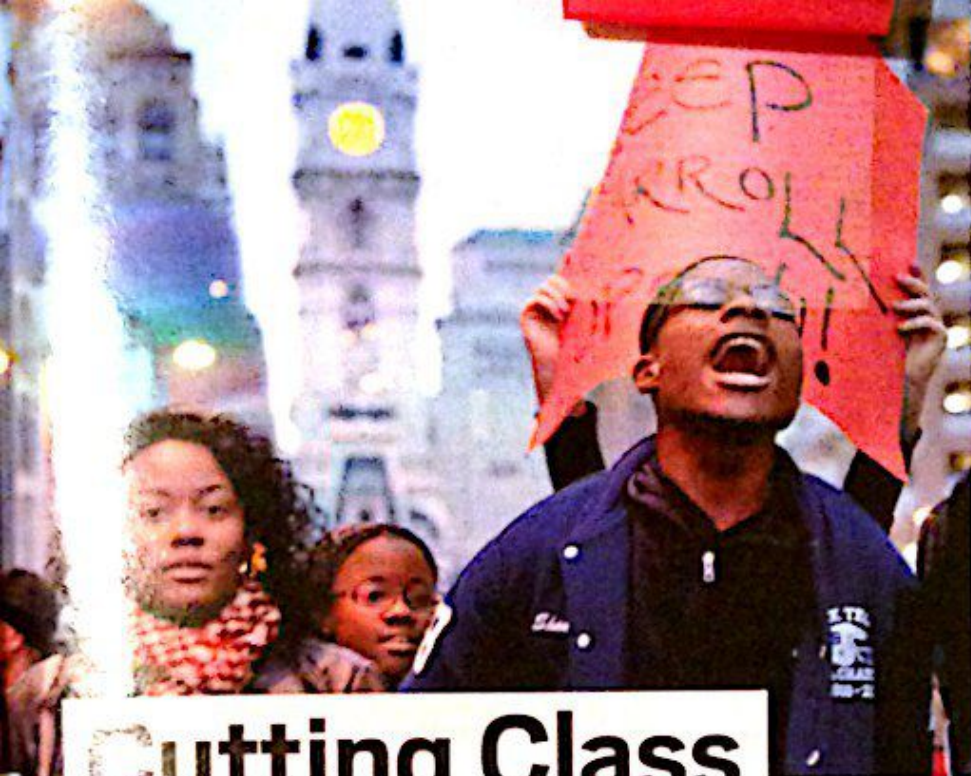
Paper Trail

Paying your monthly dues in cash is not advised. But if unavoidable, Rodriguez says tenants have the right to request invoices, detailing the date received, total amount, periods covered and apartment number. She also suggests having the landlord's signature as well.



Home Improvements

If your landlord fails to make required building maintenance, you may be able to sue for repairs or a rent reduction. According to Rodriguez, it's in your own best interest to document all correspondence and requests in writing so there's evidence to support your claims.



Cutting Class

IF THE PHILADELPHIA board of education has its way, 37 public schools in the area will be consolidated and closed by June. According to superintendent William Hite Jr., the plan will save the nearly bankrupt system and improve overall performance.

Jerry T. Jordan, president of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT), disagrees. "This is absolutely about saving a few dollars in the short term, not about education quality," he argues. "Philadelphia spends about half per student of what is spent in neighboring suburbs. This has severely impacted our schools' ability to deliver quality instruction."

The potential consequences of the proposed closures range from safety concerns for displaced students going to neighborhoods with gang issues to transportation hazards and classroom overcrowding. Even parents whose children aren't enrolled in one of the targeted institutions have objections. "My daughter is concerned with the possibility of children with behavioral issues being transferred to her school," says Marti McCall, mother of a Philadelphia charter school student. "That could taint the safety of her environment."

The PFT has since partnered with the Philadelphia Coalition Advocating for Public Schools to propose an alternative community-based plan for education and call for a one-year moratorium on any closings. The School Reform Commission will vote this month on its final course of action. —by Souleo

Dangerous Grounds

• MINORS HAVE RIGHTS.

But it appears a 15-year-old's were violated at Chicago's Taft High School. Last November, the unidentified student claimed that an accusation of drug possession led to a security guard examining his genital area in the boy's bathroom to look for evidence, while a police officer and female assistant principal watched. Nothing was found on the teen. Now, his parents Michelle and Anthony Woodman are suing Chicago Public Schools for their son's mistreatment. "His civil rights were violated when he was strip-

searched without cause," says Julie Herrera, the Woodmans' lawyer.

"The way that it was done was outrageous."

Hopefully justice will be served and such blatant misuses of power can be avoided in the future.

—by Chandler Rollins





Life After Death

Alvina Alston, 36, shares how she coped with burying three of her babies in seven months

▶ **WHEN I FOUND** out I was having triplets I felt blessed. Although I had a daughter who is now 17, I had lost two previous babies due to birth defects. After that I didn't want to have any more children. But triplets run in my family, and I thought this was God giving me back the babies I lost. My husband and I were ecstatic, but that later turned to sorrow.

I was 25-weeks pregnant when I felt a pain. I looked down and blood was coming out from between my legs. I knew something was wrong. I went to the ER, where they gave me an emergency C-section. One of the babies died immediately from lack of oxygen, the second lived for four months before succumbing to a sepsis infection, and the last one died two months later. She was a fighter. We hoped to bring

her home but one day she went into a coma and never woke up— she was brain dead.

The doctors said my triplets died because of low birth weight, but I heard of infants living at 22 weeks. What hurt me most was that there were drug-addicted people with babies who lived. I did everything right— no drinking, no drugs, so why didn't my babies live? Why did I have to suffer through three funerals in seven months? That's something I grappled with emotionally.

Even though I prayed, I questioned God and went through a bout of depression. I felt like there was no reason for me to live. That kind of loss wipes you out mentally. It put a strain on the relationship with my husband. We were like walking zombies. Seeing your baby open her eyes and smile, only to die— you never lose that pain. As human beings, we don't get over that.

"Seeing your baby open her eyes and smile, only to die— you never lose that pain."

What pulled me through was my oldest daughter. She didn't understand what was going on at the time so I had to be strong for her. That was my saving grace. Then, a year after the triplets passed I got pregnant again and had a baby girl named Daria who is now 11. And I gave birth to my son Bryce the following year. They're both healthy and strong. So God took my triplets but He gave me more.

This experience makes my testimony stronger to deliver others from sadness. I feel honored that God chose me to have this happen to because he saw something in me. So in telling my story I hope that I'm saving lives. —as told to Souleo



Unbuckled Justice

BY SOULEO

— **NO ONE** expects a traffic stop to turn deadly. But that's the reality facing one Florida family. In May, 38-year-old Marlon Brown was chased by police for an alleged seatbelt violation. Dash-cam footage shows him fleeing on foot before getting run over by a pursuing squad car. The manner of death was ruled an accident, but the Florida Dept. of Law Enforcement Medical Examiners Commission is calling that autopsy report into question.

Although a grand jury did not indict Officer James Harris of any wrongdoing, he was eventually fired and a settlement was reached with the victim's family for

\$550,000. Still, Brown's ex-wife, Krystal, is demanding that Harris be charged with vehicular homicide. "We are fighting for justice," she asserts. The Browns' attorney, Benjamin Crump, says that a criminal case hinges on the the commission's review.

"The biggest thing is to have the manner of death changed from accident to homicide," he explains. "If a video showed you or me driving toward someone with such velocity that the impact would kill them, we likely wouldn't get the same consideration."

The City of DeLand Police Department refused JET's requests for comment.

HBCU Victory

BY CHARREA SYKES

A FEDERAL judge recently ruled that Maryland violated its constitutional commitment to equality between state-run HBCUs and traditionally White universities. A 2006 case argued that African-American schools were systematically starved of funding while the state allowed their most popular programs to be duplicated at White schools, forcing a drop in HBCU enrollment. The funding claim was dismissed, but non-Black institutions may be forced to close, transfer or merge programs with local HBCUs.



Not So Fast

Struggling to make ends meet, restaurant workers ban together in an effort to supersize the minimum wage above the poverty line

BY SOULEO

FAST FOOD workers across the United States are no longer just taking orders; they're making them too. In a push to raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15 per hour, chain restaurant employees throughout multiple cities—including New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, Milwaukee, Kansas City, Seattle and Flint, MI—have gone on strike against several major fast food companies. Their mobilization spotlights the growing struggles of many African-American families to meet basic needs such as rent, health care and groceries at the current base pay rate.

"Many minimum wage workers have to rely on government assistance to afford everyday living expenses," explains David Cooper, an analyst at the Economic Policy Institute (EPI). "These important programs shouldn't act as a subsidy for corporations that are making billions of dollars per year."

According to a 2013 EPI re-

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