



Providing Positive African American News to Berks County, PA

## A Black History Celebration For The Ages

By Wilma Dean\*

On February 23, 2024, Alvernia University presented a magnificent Black History Month program on the main campus in Frances Hall. The program featured Black visual art with meet-the-artist opportunities, networking with Berks County Black leaders, a gospel ensemble, live jazz/blues, and brief presentations.



Jason Moss



Theron Cook

Two talented local artists, Theron Cook and Jason Moss, displayed and talked about the inspirations for their works.

Four community leaders, Mary Kargbo, Stacey Taylor, Dr. Joseph Amprey, and Alexander Civil talked about the inspirations for their contributions.



Mary Kargbo

Mary Kargbo, is the most effective CEO of the Berks Community Health Center which now serves over 10,000 individuals each year. Perhaps, the most impressive attribute of the Berks Community Health Center is that

its clients' ability to pay for the services rendered there is not influenced by their income levels.

\*Wilma Dean is the Business Manager of THE DRUM

## An Update On Stevie Mitchell



Stevie Mitchell

Berks County High School basketball fans will never forget Stevie Mitchell. He is a 2021 graduate of Wilson High School where he was a two-time Berks Player of the Year, who led the league in scoring during his final two years there. In fact,

Mitchell helped Wilson win back-to-back Berks championship titles. He concluded his career with 2,060 points, the fourth most in league history. He averaged 25.6



Stacey Taylor

Stacey Taylor is the President of both the Reading Chapter and the Pennsylvania National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Dr. Joseph Amprey is the founder and publisher of THE DRUM, a newspaper which highlights the achievements of African Americans.



Joseph Amprey



Alex Civil

Alexander Civil is the founder and Executive Director of BRING THE CHANGE. This organization's mission is to create sustainable communities through education and the power of cultural

diversity. Their most constructive activities have included an annual cultural diversity festival, a recent collaboration with the Reading chapter of the NAACP in the production of the Black Excellence Soiree. Another of their most important activities is the leadership training program for students at Reading High School and for high school students in Haiti.

This fantastic program was planned and implemented by Dr. Darryl Mace, Vice President for Mission, Diversity & Inclusion and his staff at Alvernia University. Kudos are in order for Dr Mace and his staff!

## Three Super Scholars Sparkled On BCTV

It occurred almost 3 months ago, but viewers are still talking about the dynamic performances of 3 super scholars, Dr. Bruce Alick, Dr. Kami Fletcher, and Dr. Darryl Mace on February 12, 2024, on Berks Community Television (BCTV) on the program, "Diversity: The Wider Vision." Alick is the Pastor of Zion Baptist Church in Reading, Fletcher is Associate Professor of American and African History and Co-Coordinator of Women's and Gender Studies at Albright College, and Mace is the Vice President of Mission, Diversity, and Inclusion at Alvernia University. All three of them are renowned and well published scholars. For an hour, during a commemoration of Black History Month, they mesmerized their audience with data about African American History.

Some of the revelations of this awesome threesome included the powerful impact of Black women on the civil rights movement and the differences between Feminism and Womanism, which originated from the writings of Alice Walker. Womanisms refers to feminists of color, more specifically Black feminists. Other influential African American women mentioned in their discussions were Jacqueline Grant, Ella Baker, and Evelyn Brooks Higgenbotham. Moreover, they revealed that the part of Martin Luther King's famous 1963 speech at the historic "March on Washington" was inspired by Mahalia Jackson's urging, "Tell them about the dream!"

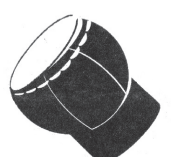
One of the most important revelations set forth by these scholars was the fact that the purpose of slavery in the American colonies was to divide poor Whites and Blacks.

If you would like to see this "Must See" program, go to bctv.org and click on the "Diversity: The Wider Vision" program of February 12, 2024.

### Inside

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plus more!





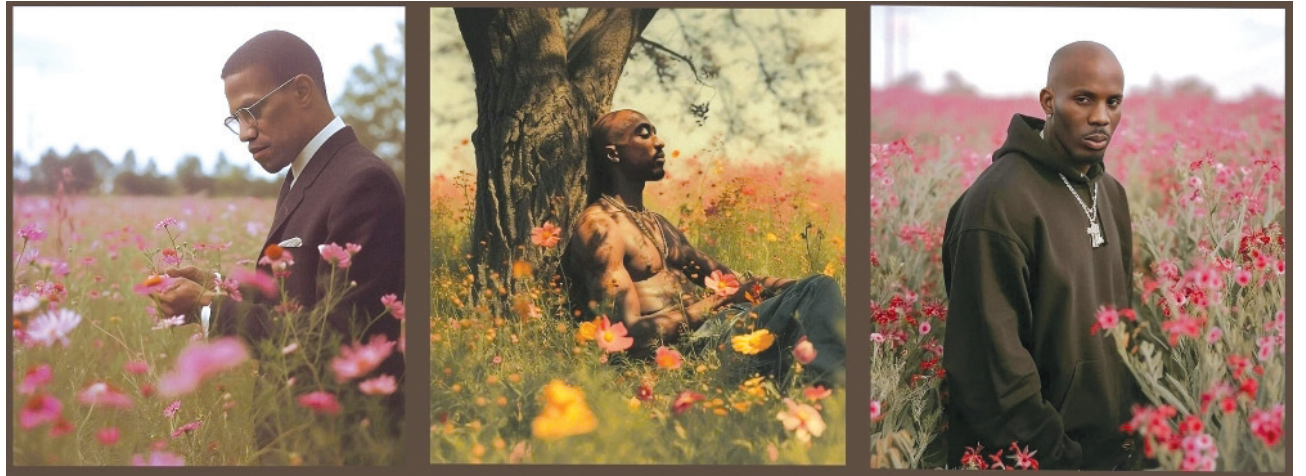
## Walking in the Field With My Ancestors

By Ashley R. Jones, MS

As another Black history Month passes, we're left with that continued feeling of "so now what?" The stores have pulled their merch, discounted their overflow of unsold content, and will be "down" with us next February 2025. The countless struggles of stores getting it wrong and having cringe-worthy and avoidable mistakes circulating the virtual world, we have come to a place of meh or contentment.

What is Black History month? Some say it's an orchestrated and empty attempt to include us in the conversation of history. Yet, there's no pause in them trying to erase our contributions or creation of this society, this country. A hot button topic of CRT being seen as the new monster in closed minded communities is now making waves. Black History is unfortunately easing its way away from us. We as a people have to fight for ourselves to be seen, to be celebrated, to matter. My education in Black History always highlighted the negatives, such as slavery or other dehumanizing situations, but it never brought to light the beauty of Blackness. Having to educate myself, has been an eye-opener to what history has been held from us.

Back in February, I found myself scrolling through social media, and stumbled upon these images. Captivated by the simplistic beauty of our leaders, our artists, and those who've held space in our hearts, enjoying the essence of nature. To flock, to pose, to ponder in a field of petals. The peace I felt scanning the images and knowing the creation is of artificial intelligence, it still pulled at my heartstrings. To know that these black and beautiful humans walked this earth and left their marks gave me chills. Black history is not something simply celebrated for 28 days, it's something that should be celebrated at all times.



The photos pictured are by the creative soul known as Justin Sims, also known by his instagram handle @jlsayart. These series of work are titled "Give Them Flowers"

To walk with Malcolm X and watch him embrace the most delicate of things in the palms of his powerful hands while staring intently. 2Pac resting in a throne of flowers after having such a trial of life's cruel game. DMX staring openly, surrounded by an abundance of delicate beauty. A man who lived a hard life, could be fragile for this moment. These men have passed in varying ways and have lived varying lives. Looking into the symbolism of these images, it triggered the notion that this may be a heaven or a place of peace since these men are no longer living. Their pain no longer lingering.

Black art is history. Creating content from a simple idea and using one's talent to magnify their light to shine to others is a gift. Art is a form of communication, to speak one's truth or to highlight a frustration and disruption of the norm. Art speaks. Black history should be a passion for others. As an artist myself, I find myself lost in creation with that burning sensation of wanting to make something great, make something that captures the heart and eye of my audience. Performing for my people.

To leave a piece of myself to be remembered, cherished and passed down. I want to be Black History.

Ask yourself this, do you see yourself as a history maker? At times I find myself questioning my life's work and what my mark is. History is something that unfortunately can be lost if not continued to share. Stories passed from our ancestors have faded. Documents have been lost and their words left unspoken, unread. We as a people have broken grounds and shattered glass ceilings. We make something from nothing. Like a flower growing from the confines of concrete we always make a way. We thrive and will continue to thrive.

I found myself drawn inward to think of the things that I can accomplish to leave my mark. Black history is made everyday. Therefore, I leave you with the challenge of pushing yourself out of the box of February and making your mark. Be the history that you want to see. Feel the power of performing on your stage. You are history in the making.



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*"Dream with ambition, lead with conviction, and see yourself in a way that others might not see you, simply because they've never seen it before."*

~Kamala Harris



# BLACK HEROES

## FAMOUS BLACKS BORN IN APRIL

### Colin L. Powell (1937 - 2021)

Colin L. Powell, who was born on April 5, 1937 was a politician, diplomat, statesman, military officer, and the first African American Secretary of State for the USA. The son of Jamaican immigrants, he was born in New York, NY where he attended public schools and earned a Bachelor's Degree from the City College of New York and a Master's Degree from George Washington University in Washington, DC.

After graduating from a ROTC program at CCNY, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the USA, and after more than 3 decades as an army officer, he rose to the rank of a 4 Star General.

General Powell, a Republican, was appointed to numerous prestigious positions by President Reagan, and both Presidents George and George W. Bush. Moreover, Powell exhibited sterling courage and impeccable integrity, as a member of the Republican Party, who twice endorsed Presidential candidate Barack Obama and criticized the dishonesty of President Trump.



Colin L. Powell  
wikipedia.com

### Jill Scott (1972 - )

Jill H. Scott, a multitalented poet, songwriter, singer, model, and actress was born in Philadelphia, PA on April 4, 1972. As a singer she has mastered numerous genres (soul, neo soul, hip hop, spoken word, and jazz). She has also performed as an actress in scores of films and television programs.



Jill H. Scott  
newsweek.com

In 2003, Scott established the Blues Babe Foundation, a program whose purpose is to help young minority students pay for university expenses. She also donated \$100,000 to start this foundation.

Most importantly, in 2006 at the Essence Musical Festival, she asserted that far too many hip hop artists have disrespect for Black women with lyrics that have been dirty, inappropriate, unhealthy and polluted. She also encouraged hip hop audiences to be more demanding of hip hop performers.

*"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any."*

- Alice Walker.

### ABOUT US

THE DRUM is published 6 times annually. We publish in February, April, June, August, October, & December. Unless otherwise indicated, all articles herein are written by the Publisher/Editor, Joseph Amprey.

### OUR MISSION IS TO CELEBRATE BLACK ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS.

Please call us at 240.729.5293 or email us at [readingdrumnewspaper@gmail.com](mailto:readingdrumnewspaper@gmail.com) or write to us at **THE DRUM**, P.O. Box 12711, Reading PA, 19612 with topic suggestions.

### STAFF

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## AFRICAN AMERICAN Do you know?

1. Who is the dynamic African American Member of the US Congress for Texas?
2. Who were the African American rookie head coach and the rookie starting quarterback for the NFL Houston Texans for the 2023 season?
3. Who is the Chair of the US Congressional Black Caucus?
4. Who is the President of both the Reading Chapter and the Pennsylvania NAACP?
5. Who is the President of Lincoln University of Pennsylvania?
6. Who is the former Columnist for THE DRUM, who is now the Reading City Councilman for the 4th District?
7. Who is the Chairman of the Reading and Vicinity Ministerial Association?
8. Who is the African American who is the first woman to be elected mayor of Philadelphia, PA?
9. Who is the African American, who has been the head coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers since 2007?
10. Who is the African American mayor of Pittsburgh, PA, and from which historically black university did he graduate?

The answers can be found on page 7.



# THE DRUM

NEWSPAPER

## Braxton Key Perseveres



Braxton Key

Braxton Key is an American professional basketball player for the Denver Nuggets of the National Basketball Association, on a two-way contract with the Grand Rapids Gold of the NBA G League. He played college basketball for the Alabama Crimson Tide and the Virginia Cavaliers.

Key enjoyed success at Virginia. He played on their 2018-19 National Championship team, and he was named All-ACC Honorable Mention.

Key started his professional career in 2020. After going undrafted in the 2020 NBA draft, Key joined the Delaware Blue Coats of the NBA G League in January 2021, after being selected in the G League draft. In 43 career NBA G League games, he averaged 14.8 points, 6.1 rebounds, 2.9 assists, 1.8 steals and 1.3 blocks in 23.7 minutes. Last year, he helped the Delaware Blue Coats win the NBA G League title.

Key is now playing for the Denver Nuggets on a two-way contract with the Grand Rapids Gold of the NBA G League.

With two-way contracts, players are paid one salary for their time in both leagues. Only players with three or fewer years of NBA service are able to sign two-way contracts, which can be for either one or two seasons. Let's hope that Key develops into a Superstar with the Nuggets. We have a special reason to root for him because he is the son of Eric Key, the State Farm Insurance agent in Temple, PA. His Dad played for Radford University in Virginia.



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## THE DRUM QUESTION OF THE MONTH\*

### WHICH HOLIDAY, CHRISTMAS OR EASTER, IS MORE IMPORTANT?

RESPONSES:



**Apostle Edna Lewis,**  
Pastor of God's Worship & Praise Temple & Truth Ministries, Reading, PA:

*"Christmas is more important. Jesus had to be born first."*



**Rev. J. L. Grant,**  
Pastor of The Church of Deliverance, Reading, PA:

*"Both are important. You can't have one without the other."*



**Rev. Dr. Bruce Alick,**  
Pastor of Zion Baptist Church, Reading, PA:

*"Both holidays are important. My favorite season is Lent because it leads us to Easter. I love the joy and happiness of Christmas. On Good Friday, we observe the sacrifice by Jesus. Easter is a celebration."*



**Pastor Jack Williams,**  
Pastor of First Century Worship Center, Reading, PA:

*"The answer can be found in Isaiah 9:6, For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

\*This Question of the Month is a reprint from April 2023.

**Super Bo & Super Sally:**  
Episode 16  
**BLACK SUPER HEROES**  
Story by Joseph Amprey  
Illustrations by Stan Barnes

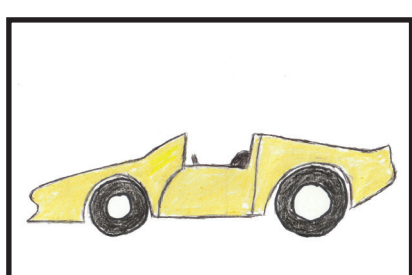
Ann then said to Jamika, "Wow! look at that fancy car parked in the school's visitor's parking space."



Jamika replied, "What kind of car is it?"



Ann responded, "I think that it's a Lamborghini. Stick around. Maybe Juni and his boys will carjack it; you can get a ride."



Jamika said, "I wouldn't dare do that, and if you don't want to get arrested, don't you do that either."



*to be continued...*



## Great Expectations For Albright Basketball



Eric Chamberlain

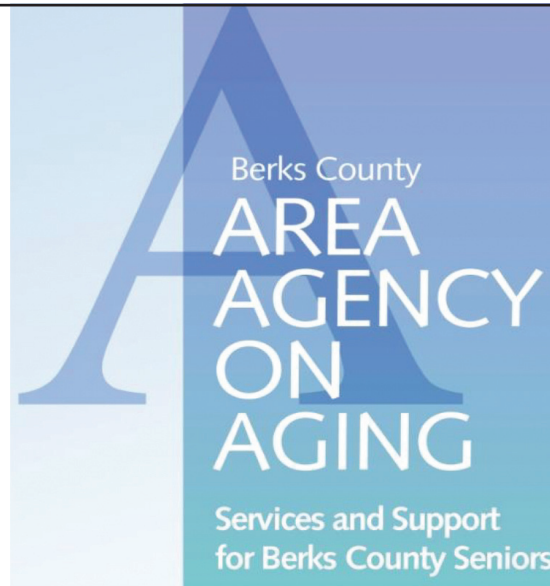


Chris Kouemi

The Albright College basketball team is making steady progress under Coach Rick Ferry, who has been a most impressive leader for 23 years. With the return next year of all of their starters, especially their lead scorer, guard Eric Chamberlain (from West Philadelphia) with 15.9 points per game, and leading rebounder Chris Kouemi (from Ivory Coast, West Africa) 7.8 rebounds per game; they have great expectations for the 2024-25 season.



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## Seleda Simmons, “The Real Deal”

By Rosa J. Parra,  
 Founder of Palo Magazine  
 palomagazine.com



Seleda Simmons

**PM: What is your name and where were you born?**

**SS:** My name is Seleda Simmons, I was born and raised in Reading, Berks County, PA.

**PM: Tell us a bit about your passion and your struggles.**

**SS:** The eighties are what gave me the ability to love this city the way I do, everything in my world was about togetherness. I am from the north side of Reading but throughout my years I have lived in different areas within the inner city, so my demographic experiences were not confined to just one race of people, and we all got along regardless of racial differences. Throughout the mid-nineties, I started noticing the change within people. My mother started to deal with her difficulties in life as a single mother of five and by the age of fifteen, I was declared emancipated by the city of Reading. There were so many things I was subjected to because of my circumstances and my own decisions. Survival was my only concern and because of that, I learned my most valuable lessons through the streets.

**PM: What changed when you became a mother?**

**SS:** Being a victim and a contributor to the streets it was time eventually to change direction and that came at 24 when I discovered I was soon to be a mother. Now being a mother so many changes occurred that were necessary to be a good mother and I had no problem making them, but it was difficult. I then at some point decided that I had an interest in furthering my education, so I attended RACC for some time but due to me in that time becoming a single parent of three my attention was directed to attending to my family situation.

**PM: When did you understand the assignment of life?**

**SS:** After working in the mental health field with children and adults I was able to really get an idea of life and how important mental health awareness was to us as an entirety. I was able to learn how important information was and make sure we had as much control of our outcome as possible. Let us just say I was beginning to understand



Rosa J. Parra

the assignment of life and how difficult we make it when it does not have to be that way.

I originally wanted to simply create an outlet for people to get information about mental health through a podcast and be able to provide a platform for people who look just like me and have normalized every stressful aspect of life. Within a couple of days, God completely changed that plan and not knowing a single person or thing in or about the nonprofit world in September 2020 I began my journey to become what the City of Reading knows today as the #1 grassroots nonprofit The Real Deal 610, servicing in several poverty multipliers such as Mental Health Awareness, Youth Advocacy, and Convicted Felon fairness.

**PM: What are you up to now?**

**SS:** In 2021 I was given the greatest blessing needed for this journey I was embarking on, when I was introduced to Larry Berringer Executive Director of Berks Community Action Program. In meeting Mr. Berringer, I was given my own office space free of charge so I could provide services to the community. Along with meeting Mr. Berringer he dedicated himself to mentoring me in every aspect, which I would not have made this far if it were not for his guidance. Giving back is a very fulfilling thing to do, but it comes with such a huge price to pay.

After a year of being at BCAP as The Real Deal 610, I was then offered a paying position at BCAP to run a program I was able to help create for BCAP. So not only do I run a nonprofit, but I also now work for one of the greatest nonprofits in this city. The program is called F.A.S.T. – family assistance and support for teens, where while families are out trying to support their children, we support them through various ways such as but not limited to; housing and utility assistance, job readiness, budgeting, goal organizing, employment search and so much more.

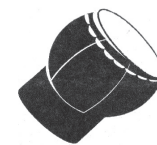
To contact or support Seleda Simmons contact her via [www.therealdeal610.org](http://www.therealdeal610.org) or (610) 376-6571 ext. 34.

### Answers to Do You Know

1. Jasmine Crockett
2. DeMeco Ryans is the head coach, and C. J. Stroud is the starting quarterback for the Houston Texas.
3. Representative Steven Horford
4. Stacey Taylor
5. Dr. Brenda A. Allen
6. Wesley Butler
7. Rev. Jeffery D. Bell
8. Cherelle Parker
9. Mike Tomlin
10. Ed Gainey is a graduate of Morgan State University.

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~Martin Luther King, Jr.



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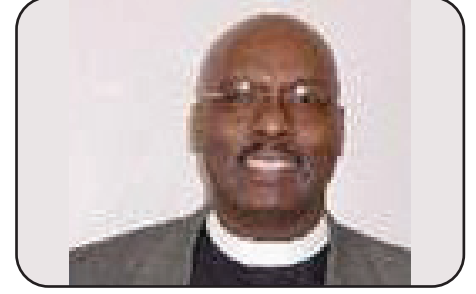
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Bishop Brookins

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Pastor Kelly

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Reverend Dr. Alick

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~Martin Luther King, Jr.