

The Phenomenal Panel

By Aries Franklin Ortiz



Top row left to right: Kimberly Clark, Andrea White, Tonya Gilmore, S. Jackson, Dr. Cheryl Davis, Wynton Butler. Front row left to right: Dr. Camil Culbreath, Stephanie Towels, Ryan A. Breisch, Kevin Colins & Dr. Tamara Smith.

There is no better way to celebrate Juneteenth, than with balloons, a parade, music, plenty of food and games!

Tell me something, how amazing is it that you can read the first sentence of this article? How amazing is it that you can read this sentence you're reading now? Juneteenth celebrates our freedoms, and sometimes we forget what some of those small freedoms are. Yes, slavery was abolished. Yes, African Americans can own things such as land, homes and cars; but, another major freedom I noticed that goes unnoticed is the ability to read, write and speak freely. (To an extent of course.)

Reading and writing used to be punishable. PUNISHABLE. Imagine, that intro you just read in the beginning of this article, reading it would have gotten you killed if you were a slave. Why? Because a smart slave was a dangerous one.

The documentary "The Right to Read" directed by Jenny Mackenzie and starring Kareem Weaver, follows Weaver in exploring the rural and urban underdevelopment of reading. A teacher and activist, he sets out to fight to provide our youngest generation with the most foundational indicator of life-long success: the ability to read. This documentary should be shown to every teacher and student across the country.

It seems the government and public school systems have pushed literacy so far to the bottom of the barrel, it's almost scary. During our Juneteenth celebration, a phenomenal panel of teachers met at the GoggleWorks in Reading, PA to discuss this country wide issue and that's where I learned how dangerously low literacy levels in Berks County are, and it is mind blowing and frankly, it's quite scary.

We're just going to call this group THE PHENOMENAL PANEL because where this is darkness, this group offered some light at the end of the tunnel. Discussing reading clubs, book clubs, reading in other classes outside of English, which in itself I found to be a phenomenal suggestion. In gym class? Read the signage in the gym. In Math class? Read the word problem. Incredible. Another suggestion I found incredible is eliminating reading "level" books in the classroom. Each classroom should be stocked with books fit for their age and grade of course, but eliminating the "this student can't read this yet because he or she isn't in the purple or green reading level yet", when it's a book that really interests them is a MUST. Dr. Culbreath expressed this in her speech to the audience when she told us about her experience questioning a teacher to explain what deems a book a certain reading level and the teacher, unfortunately never giving a direct answer.

Mr. Wynton Butler told a story of a child angry and walking out of class and when Mr. Butler confronted the student, he said "it's because the teacher wouldn't allow him to read the book he wanted to read, because he wasn't at that reading level yet." Mr. Butler even joked that he'd rather have a student mad because he wasn't allowed to read, than mad for other reasons.

Another subject I think we could all agree on is children reading in the home and families that may not have the time or funds to provide those books for their youth. How do we help get them these books?

All in all I think we are all in agreement that youth and even some adults having a below average literacy level is an epidemic that needs to be addressed on all platforms

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A Word From The Publisher

Joseph Amprey, Ph.D.



Matriculation in higher education is an essential for success. On Monday, August 12th at 8 PM, Wednesday August 14th at 10 AM, Friday, August 16th at 3 PM, and Sunday, August 18th at Noon, BERKS COMMUNITY TELEVISION (BCTV), Channel 15, will feature a program about admissions to all of the local colleges and universities in Berks County. This program is a MUST SEE for persons interested in getting admitted to and getting financial aid to our local colleges and universities.

Our Finest Hour



Dr. Clifton Kenon

On June 20, 2024, 80 persons attended the 35th Annual Dr. Ronald E. Smith Scholarship Awards and Recognition Banquet at the McMillan Center of Albright College. Local High School graduates were honored. It was an excellent program which featured a powerful keynote speech by Dr. Clifton Kenon, a senior career member at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Notwithstanding his youth (37 years old), Kenon has already earned three degrees (bachelors, masters, and doctorate), and he has been a health administrator and diversity activist.

Specifically, Dr. Kenon encouraged the young people to walk boldly toward things that make them uncomfortable and that the solutions for community problems can be found in their communities. He said that he never forgets the people who nurtured him in his home town in rural North Carolina.

This program also featured a dynamic youth speaker, Izahne Williams, a native of Berks County, who just graduated (2023), at the top of her class at Morgan State



Izahne Williams

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Inside

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 - Support Black-Owned Businesses ➡ Page 4
 - Beau's Back! ➡ Page 5
- plus more!



Our Finest Hour

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University. Her career goal is to be an anesthesiologist, the same profession as that of Dr. Ronald Smith.

Finally, Kudos are in order for the altruistic members of our community who collaborated on the production of this most important program: Dr. Debra Townsley, Interim President of Albright College, Dr. Brenda Ingram Wallace, the Associate Vice President for Advocacy and Inclusion at Albright College, the Iron Men Athletic Association, Bethel AME Church, W&E Enterprises, the United Missionaries of Reading. The Reading Branch of the NAACP, Rev. Janice Grant, Pastor of the Church of Deliverance of Reading, PA, and the Sisterhood.



The Sisterhood left to right: Ramona Turpin, Elta Jackson Henry, Dionne Stubbs, Maryjo Smith, Johnethia Archie, Tonya Gilmore, Vickie Sylvain and Dr. Linda Matthews.

Pictured below are some of the youths who were honored.



Derrick Asante, who was honored by Bethel A.M.E. Church will be attending Penn State University.



Juliana Lee, who was honored by the Sisterhood and Bethel A.M.E. Church.



Malachi Rodwell, who was honored by the Community Scholarship Committee will going to the Bible College of Lancaster.



Tatiana Garcia, who was honored by the Iron Men Athletic Association will be going to Kutztown University.

Finally kudos are in order for the collaborators who made this event possible:

- Dr. Debra Townsley, Interim President of Albright College
- Dr. Brenda Ingram Wallace, Associate Vice President for Advocacy & Inclusion of Albright College
- The Iron Men Athletic Association
- Bethel AME Church
- W&E Enterprises
- The United Missionaries of Reading
- The Reading Branch of the NAACP
- The Sisterhood



AFRICAN AMERICAN
Do you know?

1. Who was the phenomenally successful entrepreneur who was the richest African American woman at the time of her death in 1919, and what was the source of her success?
2. Who was the African American actress who won an Oscar for her role in the film, “Monster’s Ball?”
3. Who is the African American who is the current Secretary of Defense of the United States?
4. What are the names of the talented African American Berks County couple who were teachers in the Reading School District?
5. Who is the former superintendent of the Reading School District, who is now the Secretary of Education for the Reading School District?
6. Who was the African American who invented the golf tee, and what else was he famous for?
7. Who is the current mayor of the largest city in the United States, and what was his former profession?
8. Who was the first African American governor of New York, and the first legally blind person to be sworn in as a governor of an American state?
9. Who is the African American track star who is part of an interracial couple who will be completing in the Olympics this summer, and what universities did she attend?
10. Who is the dynamic lawyer, who served as the US Attorney General under President Barack Obama?

The answers can be found on page 6.

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BLACK HEROES

FAMOUS BLACKS BORN IN AUGUST

Angela E. Bassett (1958-)

Angela Evelyn Bassett was born on August 16, 1958 in New York, NY. She is a phenomenally successful actress in both films and television. Bassett has won every award available in both fields except for an Oscar. Bassett has 2 Golden Globe Awards, 2 Academy nominations, 8 Primetime Emmy Awards, and an Academy Honorary Award. She is best known for her brilliant performance as Tina Turner in the film, *“What’s Love Got to do With It,”* and she has stated that her most satisfying role was as Betty Shabbaz in the film. *“The Autobiography of Malcolm X.”*



usmagazine.com

Angela Bassett earned two degrees (a BA and a MFA) from Yale University. She is the mother of three children, and another notable accomplishment (especially for an actress) is that she has been married for 27 years to Courtney Vance, a successful actor, who also has 2 ivy league degrees, (a BA from Harvard University and a MFA from Yale University).



Al Roker, Jr. (1954-)

Albert Lincoln Roker, Jr., who was born on August 20, 1954, is a very successful, and very popular weather presenter, journalist, television personality, and author. Having been a television weatherman for 50 years in New York and briefly in Washington, and Cleveland, OH. He is presently a weather anchor on the NBC *“Today Show.”*



facts.net

Roker is a graduate of the University of New York where he earned a BA in communications. He is a multi-talented individual, who has appeared in 4 Broadway shows, co-authored 2 murder mysteries: *Billy Blessings* (2009), and *The Morning Show Murders* (2010), co-wrote (with his wife, Deborah Roberts) the non-fiction book, *Been There, Done That: Family Wisdom for Modern Times* (2016).

Finally, since 1995, Al Roker has hosted the Macy’s Thanksgiving Parade 30 times.



The Phenomenal Panel

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across the nation, ESPECIALLY in the African American Community. Afterall, at one time we were killed for something that deemed us as dangerous. If we can teach all of our youth (and adults) to read and write efficiently - Imagine just how influentially dangerous they’ll be in life.

NOTE: Aries Franklin Ortiz is a poet/writer



ABOUT US

THE DRUM is published 6 times annually. Hereafter, we will 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 or write to us at **THE DRUM**, P.O. Box 12711, Reading PA, 19612 with topic suggestions.

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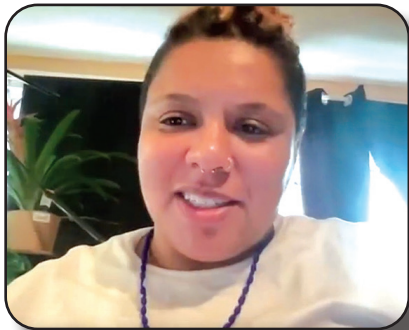
Local Creative Artists Sparkled On BCTV



Ashley Jones



Naimon Lyons



Aries Franklin Ortiz



Malachi Rodwell

On Monday, July 8, 2024. Ashley Jones, Naimon Lyons, Aries Franklin Ortiz, and Malachi Rodwell delighted Berks County television viewers on the Berks Community Television (BCTV) Program, “Diversity: The Wider Vision.” Each of them performed poems and/or songs that they wrote.

Jones recited two poems, Lyons sang a song, and recited two poems. Franklin Ortiz recited two poems and Rodwell recited two poems. Also on the same program were George Paterno, a very talented songwriter, and Elizabeth Stanley, a brilliant poet.



George Paterno



Elizabeth Stanley

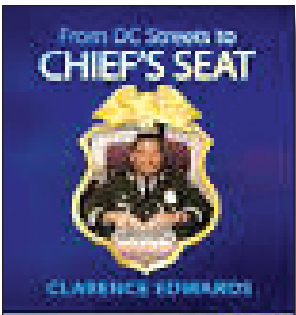
Their spectacular performance can be seen at any time on BCTV, Channel 15. You can see their performance online by going to the BCTV website at (bctv.org) and going to the time that the program was aired (Monday, July 8, 2024 at 8 PM).

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Book Review

Title: *From the DC Streets to the Chief’s Seat*
- 257 pages
Author: Clarence Edwards
This book is available at Amazon



This brilliantly written book is the story of the author’s rise from the streets of Washington, DC to the position of Chief of Police of Montgomery County Maryland. He is the product of a strong nurturing family with solid Christian values as well as an urban neighborhood, a sound education (He is a graduate of The American University [Bachelor’s Degree, the Johns Hopkins University [Master’s Degree], the FBI Academy, and the Penn State Justice and Safety Institute) which prepared him for a 40 year career in law enforcement.

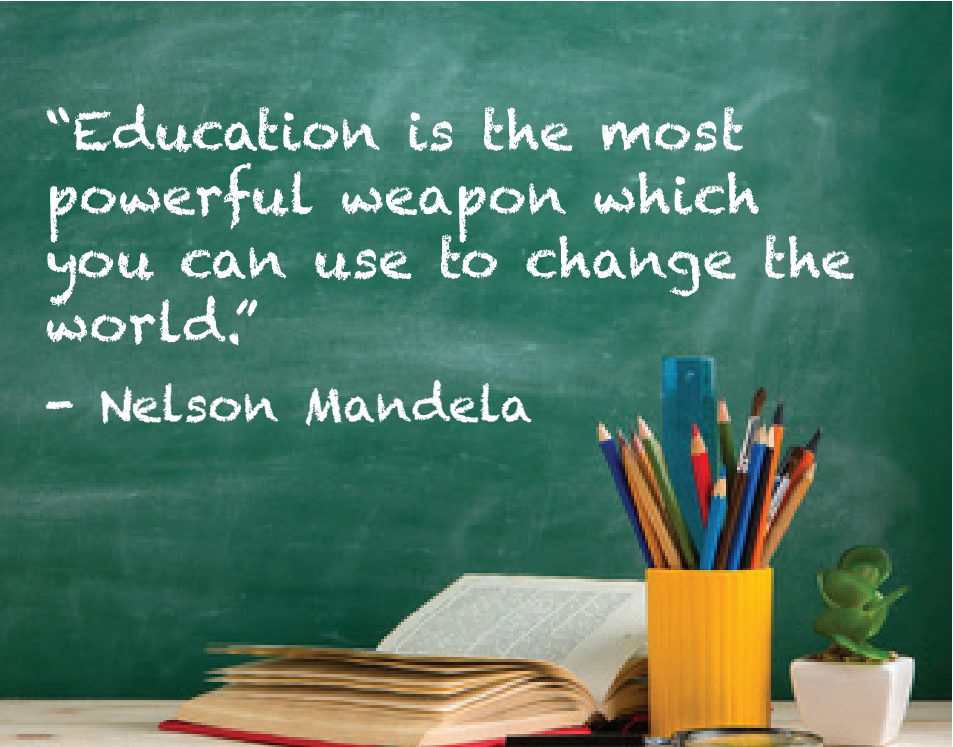
Prior to becoming the Chief of Police for Montgomery County Maryland, Edwards was an assistant commissioner for the US General Services Administration and a major in the US Park Police.

From 1991-94, he was the Chief of Police of Montgomery County, MD. In all of his duties, he was a strong advocate for minorities.

This book is a must read for persons interested in improving the relationship between law enforcement and the Black community.

Finally, Edward’s most important assertion in this memoir is the importance of collaboration between African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans and working class Whites.

“One child, one teacher,
one pen and one book
can change the world.”
~ Malala Yousafzai



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Ashley Jones

Say Your Name, Say It Proud

By Ashley R. Jones, MS

What is in a name? Does your name ring a level of importance when you drop it or do you receive blank stares filled with stereotypical judgment? Minorities and names have been a long standing situation of trying to fight for a place of acceptance on various platforms. I myself do not have an ethnic sounding name and have encountered situations where my name did not match my appearance when it came to the struggles of a job hunt in my youth.

Referencing back to my experience, I was a young college student trying to make ends meet for myself and ventured out to a job interview and onboarding. I was excited because I had the opportunity to work and I enjoyed being independent because let's be honest, college life isn't cheap. I was a regular young adult with 2 years left of college and after a series of applications and no call-backs, I finally landed a phone interview for a cafe position. We talked for about a half hour and she was thrilled with me. She said something along the lines of my personality is bright and that I'd be a good front-end employee. The job was basically mine and I needed to simply go in person for onboarding she had informed me.

The place in question was a sweet spot that tends to be a huge employer in the area. We scheduled the day and there I went. I wasn't driving at the time so here I was making the walk to the business, in the summer heat. Carrying my folder with my documents and a freshly printed resume. I sat in the waiting area and waited for my name to be called. I made sure I looked professional, a pair of slacks, flats, and a white button down. I smiled and waited. A white woman smiling holding a sheet of paper walked through a pair of glass doors and called my name. I wasn't alone and there were a few others in the waiting space as well. She searched the sea of people with a hopeful and cheerful expression. I stood up and waved and as I walked over, her cheerful expression seemed to fade when she realized I was different from the voice on the phone and the image of me apparently did not match the image she had of me in her head. I greeted her and felt the vibe and energy was off, but I remained hopeful.

She said hello. No smile. Icy. She was short with her words and confirmed that I was "thee" Ashley R. Jones that she had spoken to prior. She directed me to a room to sit in front of a computer, left me there and had no follow-up. No onboarding, just a generic series of questions to test your ability to manage customer service, but honestly just testing your loyalty to the company. The series of questions ended and I knew I didn't have the job based on our brief

interaction. That promise of employment seemed to slip from my hand the moment she realized I was Black. She didn't come for me, but sent someone else to "collect me". They took my resume and folder for "continued consideration," but you and I both know it went directly into the trash.

That brief interaction left a stain on me that I still carry, that I am not what certain employers are seeking just because my name doesn't match. Don't get me wrong, I love my name. I love ethnic names. I love names that have a story to tell and culture attached to them. Sadly, this isn't the first time I've experienced it and honestly probably won't be the last. From then on, I made it my mission to never support this company. I refuse to purchase any of their items and will tell anyone that will listen about my experience. For them being a major employer here in good old Reading, PA, they hire minorities galore, however there are none in the front-end of the cafe, but working in the factory portion making the sweets and things to sell. Hard work, blood, sweat, and tears. I personally took this as minorities are good enough to work in the back, but aren't deserving enough to work as the first face for customers.

The full roundabout came when I sat robed up for my college graduation, December 13, 2014. There on the stage, as our guest speaker was the owner and founder of the company I had applied for. I felt it was a slap in my face, even though no one else knew my story. To have to sit and listen to someone give a speech about hope and determination, only to be discouraged from their company 2 years prior.

My situation is just a brief drop in the bucket of disappointment when it comes to minorities and employment. Long behold there have been documented incidents where your name can dictate how potential employers, educational institutions, and even just public servants view you. Currently there is a story circulating regarding a man and his social experiment on his hunt for employment going viral. Dwight Jackson, a Black man in Detroit, Michigan, applied for a position at a luxury hotel with experience in luxury hotel management, however he was not given a response regarding his application. He applied to multiple positions with no response. He took it upon himself to attempt to challenge the status quo of names and employment.

During the hunt, he completed another application. The only difference is, he shifted his name to sound less African-American, to a more Caucasian sounding name. He called himself John Jebrowski, and shocker, he received an interview after submission for the same position he previously applied for as Dwight Jackson. He did in fact attend the interview and made note of his situation regarding the name

THE DRUM

QUESTION OF THE MONTH


The Question:

What is your favorite Summer Activity?

Date: June 20, 2024


Location: The McMillan Center on the campus of Albright College at the 35th Annual Dr. Ronald E. Smith Scholarship Awards and Recognition Banquet

Responses:




Nehemiah Bass:

"Hanging Out With Friends & Playing Volleyball."



Yana Colon:

"Hanging Out with Family."



Malachi Rodwell:

"Swimming."

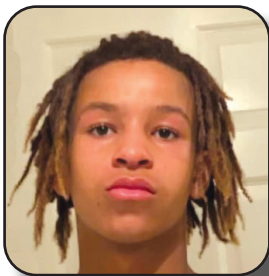
bias. He confronted his interviewer and was ultimately informed that he was no longer being considered for the position, that he was not a viable candidate. The story does not end there and is currently making its way through litigation due to Jackson filing a lawsuit of discrimination based on the "violation of Michigan Elliott Larsen Civil Rights Act."

Currently this case is making its rounds and I am hopeful he is paid his dues. This unfortunately isn't an isolated situation, just a situation with documentation that worked in his favor to have evidence to hold these institutions accountable. Name bias is a real and present danger.

Countless studies have found that name biases in employment have always existed and continue to be unchallenged. Stereotypes of people with ethnic sounding names are created and receive less call backs than those with white sounding names.

continued on page 6 ⇨

Beau's Back



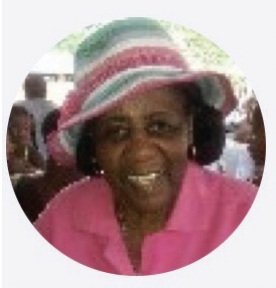
Beaumanoir Amprey

Several years ago (when he was in elementary school), Beaumanoir Amprey was the illustrator for the cartoon, "Super Bo and Super Sally." Since that time, he has been very busy, as a successful diver (One of Best for his Age in the USA). He is now a rising high school freshman at Sidwell Friends School in Washington, DC. He has enough free time this summer to return as the illustrator for THE DRUM. His name, Beaumanoir, is a combination of the French terms "beau, meaning handsome, and "noir," meaning black, and the English word, "man." "Beau is pronounced "Bo."



Centenarian Willie Mae Thomas

CONGRATULATIONS WILLIE MAE THOMAS



Mother Thomas

Kudos are in order for Willie Mae Thomas who turned 100 on May 9th, and whose family recently celebrated her birthday on May 11, 2024 with a wonderful banquet at the Washington Towers in Reading, PA attended by many family and friends!



Answers to Do You Know

1. Madam C. J. Walker made her fortune with her hair grooming business.
2. Halle Berry
3. Lloyd Austin
4. Sandi Turner, a talented artist, was a teacher, and Laura Nelson Turner was a teacher, vice principal, principal and consultant.
5. Dr. Khalid Mumin
6. Dr. George F. Grant invented the golf tee. He was also a graduate of the Harvard School of Dentistry and the first African American professor at Harvard as a professor of dentistry.
7. Eric Adams, the current mayor of New York City, is a former police officer.
8. David Paterson was the lieutenant governor of New York, who succeeded Governor Eliot Spitzer, who resigned in the wake of a prostitution scandal in 2008. Paterson served the remaining 3 years of Spitzer's term.
9. Tara Davis Woodhall, who is married to Hunter Woodhall, will also be competing in the Olympics in Paris this summer, attended the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Georgia.
10. Eric Holder, Jr.

Super Bo & Super Sally:
Episode 18
BLACK SUPER HEROES
Story by Joseph Amprey
Illustrations by Beaumanoir Amprey

Because of Sally's super powers, Juni's bullet bounced off of her chest.



Juni drops his pistol and runs away.



Sally catches up to Juni and throws him onto the sidewalk.



Sally subdues Juni and keeps him on the sidewalk until the police arrive and arrest him.



to be continued...



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Say Your Name, Say It Proud

⇒ continued from page 5

Even in victimhood, your name is important. In 2022, a young African American girl was shot and killed, unfortunately at the hands of police. A young bright little girl with the name Fanta Bility, age 8, died. In her death, a local fire house, Briarcliffe Volunteer Fire Company, held space for racism and inappropriate commentary when it came to her name and the fact that minorities were simply existing in their shared community. After their comments regarding their behavior were leaked and overheard, accountability came. The fact that these adults were making fun of a murdered 8 year old simply doesn't sit right in my soul. The firehouse was suspended from functioning for 30 days and ultimately disbanded after public outcry and disapproval of their behaviors. Minorities need firefighters too, and clearly these individuals involved may have less of a desire to save a Black life.

In closing, your name is important. Whether it's a name that symbolizes long lines of culture or has an American-twist, it matters that you are treated with respect. That you are given positive feedback and support, that you matter. We need to start disrupting these systems and acknowledge that Black people should be able to be Black people. Our names are not ghetto. When a celebrity decides to name their child an ethnic sounding name or the name of an object, they are given praise for their creativity and follow the trend. And always remember, if they mispronounce your name, correct them every single time. You are deserving the same respect and effort that non-minorities put into when pronouncing names such as Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.





Rosa J. Parra

Reasons to Support Black-Owned Businesses

By Rosa J. Parra, Founder & Editor/Palo Magazine

Did you know that supporting Black-owned businesses is so important for fostering economic equity and social justice? Historically, systemic barriers have hindered Black entrepreneurs from accessing resources and opportunities that their counterparts often take for granted. By consciously choosing to patronize Black-owned businesses, individuals can contribute to dismantling these barriers and promoting inclusivity in the economy.

- 1) Firstly, supporting Black-owned businesses helps to circulate wealth within Black communities. Economic empowerment through entrepreneurship not only creates jobs but also fosters a cycle of reinvestment that benefits the local economy. This, in turn, can lead to greater stability and resilience in these communities.
- 2) Secondly, supporting Black-owned businesses is a form of protest against systemic racism. Economic disparities rooted in racism persist today, and choosing to support Black-owned businesses sends a powerful message about equity and



justice. It challenges the status quo and encourages a more inclusive economic landscape.

- 3) Lastly, supporting Black-owned businesses is about recognizing and valuing the contributions of Black entrepreneurs to society. It acknowledges their hard work, talent, and determination in overcoming obstacles that others may not face.

When we talk about diversity, supporting Black-owned businesses encourages innovation and diversity in products and services. Different backgrounds and experiences lead to unique perspectives, which can drive creativity and excellence in business.

Ultimately, supporting Black-owned businesses is not just about making a purchase; it is about contributing to a more just and equitable society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive economically and socially.

Here is a smaller list of Black Owned Businesses, for a complete list please see the editor of this newspaper as there are over 50+ businesses just in Berks County.

1. Beckett's Rib Joint
2. Franklyn's Breakfast Burgers & Shakes
3. I'm So Reading (Clothing apparel)
4. The Plug (Sneaker store)
5. A Touch of Grace
6. Purple Finch Studios
7. Jarred Johnson Photography
8. Oakside Care Pharmacy
9. Pagoda Apparel
10. H Vidal Voice & Media
11. Mecca Caribbean and Soul Food
12. DA SPOT (Clothing Store)
13. DaBrian Marketing Group
14. Baronial Designs Photography, LLC
15. Legacy Cigar Lounge

Rosa J. Parra
Founder & Editor/Palo Magazine



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Pastor Jack Williams

FIRST CENTURY WORSHIP CENTER
234 S 11th Street, Reading, PA 19602
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Pastor: Pastor Jack Williams

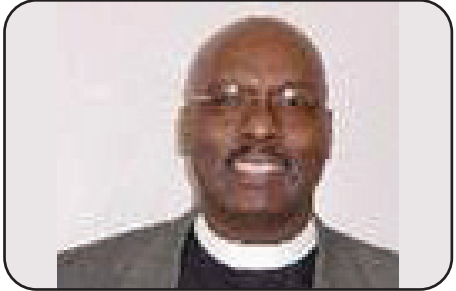
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Prayer: Tuesday - 6 p.m. (Conf. call)
Bible Study: Thursday - 6 p.m.



Apostle Edna Lewis

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610.376.4383 or 610.376.1849
Pastor: Apostle Edna Lewis

Services Times:
Sunday Worship: 11:30 am



Bishop Brookins

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH OF GOD
130 W. Buttonwood Street,
Reading, PA 19601
610.374.0790
Pastor: Bishop Robert E. Brookins

Sunday Service Times:
Early Morning Worship: 8:00 am
Sunday Morning Worship: 10:15 am
(Holy Communion every 1st Sunday)



ISLAMIC CENTER OF READING
18 S. Noble St, Reading, PA 19611
610.478.1338

Service Times:
Religious Talk every Friday at 1 pm



Pastor Bell

NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH
621 Church St., Reading, PA 19601
610.914.9069
Pastor: Pastor Jeffery D. Bell

Service Times:
Sunday Services: 9:15 a.m.
& 11:15 a.m.
Bible Study: Wednesday - 7 p.m.



Pastor Kelly

**REHOBOTH SEVENTH-DAY
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1501 Snyder St., Reading, PA 19601
Pastor: Pastor Dorian Kelly

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Pastor Alicia Snead

**WASHINGTON PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**
715 N 10th St., Reading, PA 19604
610.375.3469
Pastor: Pastor Alicia Snead

Service Times:
Sunday Worship: 10:30 am



Reverend Dr. Alick

ZION BAPTIST CHURCH
224 Washington St.,
Reading, PA 19601
610.376.5944
Pastor: Reverend Dr. Bruce Alick

Service Times:
Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m.
Bible Study: Tuesday - 11 a.m.
and Wednesday - 5:30 p.m.



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to the Soul
what breathing
is to the Body*

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I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word."
~Martin Luther King, Jr.*