



By Desi L. Campbell

Harnett
County
NAACP
Celebrates
27th
Annual
Breakfast



Each year, we pause to honor the life and enduring legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a beacon of hope, equality, and justice. Born in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 15, 1929, Dr. King became a transformative leader of the Civil Rights Movement, advocating for change through nonviolence and unity. His dream of a nation where people are judged “not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character” remains a cornerstone of the ongoing fight for justice and equality. Dr. King’s eloquent speeches and tireless efforts helped bring about landmark changes, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable society.

The Martin Luther King Jr. holiday is not just a day off but a day of reflection, service, and commitment to making the world a better place. Across the nation, communities honor his legacy with educational programs, volunteer activities, and celebrations of cultural unity. His teachings remind us that change requires courage, persistence, and compassion. As we commemorate his life, we are called to continue his work by advocating for equality, fighting against injustice, and building bridges of understanding. Dr. King’s legacy is a reminder that we all have a role in creating a society where freedom and opportunity are not privileges but rights for all.

"You are not and yet you are: your thoughts, your deeds, above all your dreams still live." — W.E.B. Du Bois, activist and sociologist

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By Denise Thurman



I changed my mind

Turning Pain into Purpose – The Journey of Tamekia La’Shonda

In the heart of North Carolina, Tamekia La’Shonda also known as Dr. Tamekia Dowdy has emerged as a symbol of resilience, compassion, and transformative leadership. Raised between Johnsonville and Sanford, Dr. Dowdy’s life story is one woven with both tragedy and triumph, shaping her into a powerful voice for change and community support. Her work—whether through music, her business ventures, or her advocacy—touches countless lives across Lee, Harnett, and Cumberland Counties.

Since age five, Tamekia has found strength and solace in music. Her first song, sung in a church choir, was Because He Lives. Over time, singing became not just a talent but a lifeline. Through personal trials—loss of her son to gun violence and the trauma of a murder trial, divorce, and the loss of her daughter—she once lost her voice but found it again in a moment of prayerful reflection. This rediscovery fueled her passion to share her journey through music, culminating in her first single, I Changed My Mind, available on all music platforms and accompanied by a music video on YouTube.

“I had always wanted to pursue music, but this experience finally gave me the courage to step forward and share my story through song,” she says. Her creative process, though daunting, ultimately brought a new layer of healing and strength, and she hopes her music inspires others to find resilience amid adversity.

With her entrance into music Tamekia launched Countree Girl Entertainment. Countree Girl began as a social group for women to come together in fun and support but has evolved into Countree Girl Entertainment, a platform that uplifts women and other artists. “Countree Girl Entertainment began as a way for women to bond, but I soon saw its potential as a full-fledged entertainment company,” she explains. Through this initiative, she hopes to foster creativity, camaraderie, and self-expression among aspiring artists and those eager to make their mark in the entertainment world.

Dr. Dowdy is also committed to using her platforms social change. She established the "Justice for Dez" campaign, as well as the This Has to Stop movement, which brings attention to issues like gun violence, domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health challenges. Dr. Dowdy’s advocacy did not stop there. In 2018, she founded Dez’s Holiday Angels to bring holiday cheer to families affected by violence. Tragically, after losing her daughter Martasia to a brain aneurysm, she co-launched Mothers S.T.A.N.D. (Standing Together Against the Nightmare of Drugs) to provide support for mothers facing the challenges of a child’s addiction. Dr. Dowdy’s passion for community healing continues to guide her as she partners with organizations across North Carolina to raise awareness and provide resources for those in need. Her work has been recognized with honors such as the “Key to the City” of Sanford, a Humanitarian Award and most notably she received the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award. Dr. Dowdy’s accomplishments are numerous. Yet, for her, these awards are simply milestones in a broader mission of compassion, resilience, and social change.

Even with all these projects to keep her busy, Dr. Dowdy’s entrepreneurial spirit is evident in her business, New Level Professional Services, which offers an array of services from bail bonds to tax preparation. “Each of my ventures is a way to lift up my community,” she says. “Whether through advocacy, business, or music, I want to create a legacy of support and resilience.”

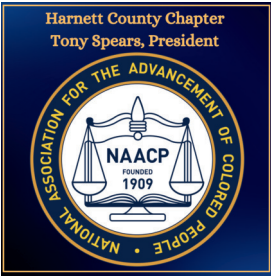
Her third single, Thinking Bout You, was released on November 1 and is available on all music platforms.



Tony Spears
President

The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination.

Meetings are held every third Tuesday in each month.



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“**The Six Triple Eight,**” directed by Tyler Perry, spotlights the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion—the only all-Black, all-female unit in the Women’s Army Corps during World War II. Tasked with clearing a massive backlog of undelivered mail in Europe, these women overcame significant challenges, including systemic racism and sexism, to boost soldiers’ morale by ensuring communication with their loved ones.

Kerry Washington delivers a compelling performance as Major Charity Adams, the battalion’s commanding officer, portraying her with conviction and depth. Ebony Obsidian also stands out as Lena Derriecott King, a young woman driven to enlist following personal loss. The film’s ensemble cast contributes to a portrayal of camaraderie and resilience among the women of the 6888th.

Critics have offered mixed reviews. Some praise the film for shedding light on a lesser-known historical narrative and commend the strong performances, particularly by Washington and Obsidian. However, others critique the film’s execution, citing issues with pacing, production quality, and a tendency toward melodrama. For instance, Decider describes it as “Tyler Perry’s Cloying Tribute to the Black Women Soldiers of WWII,” noting that despite the compelling story, the film suffers from “clunky pacing” and “lackluster editing.” Similarly, Vulture refers to it as “Tyler Perry’s Cosplay of a War Movie,” criticizing its “poor production values” and “awkward dialogue.”

While “The Six Triple Eight” brings an important and inspiring story to the forefront, viewers may find that its execution does not fully capture the depth and significance of the battalion’s contributions during the war.



Ammie McRae Jenkins Selected for The Cultural Stewardship Award



The Blueprint: Concert & Awards celebrate the transformative impact of Black women in shaping our communities and collective future. Hosted by Book Black Women, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to empowering Black women and girls, this inaugural event recognizes extraordinary women who embody excellence, resilience, and innovation. More than a celebration, The Blueprint: Concert & Awards is a tribute to the vital role Black women play as trailblazers, visionaries, and changemakers. Today's spotlight is on Ammie McRae Jenkins, recipient of the Cultural Stewardship Award.

The Cultural Stewardship Award honors individuals dedicated to preserving and promoting cultural heritage. Born in 1941 in Harnett County, NC, Ammie McRae Jenkins made history in 1962 as the first student to integrate High Point University during the civil rights movement. Despite early hardships, including racial threats that forced her family to flee their land, Ammie became a successful computer programmer, businesswoman, and community advocate. As the founder and executive director of the Sandhills Family Heritage Association, she champions Black farming, land ownership, and cultural preservation through workshops, heritage tours, farmers markets, and cultural festivals!

Read more about Ammie here:
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Harnett County Native is making an impact in the Gospel Music Industry



Christopher Ervin is a native of Harnett County, NC and a graduate of Western Harnett High School. He is a descendant of Jack Murchison of Olivia, NC (Murchison town).

With a love for God and Gospel music, Christopher Ervin called together gifted singers and musicians with similar interests and organized a choral aggregation which was christened Abraham's Descendants. Today, the choir (affectionately known as AD) boasts of a roster of singers from North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, and Georgia. In just a few, short years, AD has amassed a huge following. Well known for precision in their delivery as well as their unmistakably inimitable sound and artistry.

AD made their national debut during Bishop Hezekiah Walker's Choirfest in 2013. They were featured on John P. Kee's VIP New Artist Showcase CD in 2016. That event would serve as the precursor to their first live recording *The Process*, which made its debut in 2018. The album was a choir favorite, finding its way into the top 20 on Billboard's Top Gospel Albums charts. Their sophomore project "Take 2" was released in 2020 and debuted #3 on the iTunes Gospel/Christian charts.

Ervin & AD has managed to share the stage with such greats as Michael McDonald, Nick Jonas, Pastor John P. Kee, Dr. Ricky Dillard, Jekalyn Carr, Dr. Earnest Pugh, Avery Sunshine and many more.

Ervin & AD recorded their latest work entitled "Recover" Saturday, July 15, 2023, to a sold-out crowd in Greensboro, NC. This project is slated to be released Spring of 2024.

Harnett County Native making Waves in Preserving Sacred Music in the Church



Dr. Tony McNeill, affectionately known as "Dr. T.," is a sought-after workshop clinician, lecturer, consultant, mentor, and choral conductor. "Dr. T" currently serves as Affiliate Professor of Worship and Seminary Musician at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA. During the summer months, he is a guest lecturer in the newly-developed master's degree program in Black Sacred Music Program housed jointly at the Arkansas Center for Black Music and the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. He was Director of Choral Activities and Chairman of the Department of Performing Arts at Clinton College in Rock Hill, SC, from 2019-2022. Dr. McNeill also served four and a half years as the Director of Worship and the Arts at Atlanta's Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, "America's Freedom Church."

Dr. McNeill has held teaching positions at Texas Southern University (Houston, TX), Campbell University (Buies Creek, NC), The Interdenominational Theological Center (Atlanta, GA), and Union Presbyterian Seminary (Charlotte, NC). He has presented lectures for Duke Divinity School, Presbyterian Association of Musicians, Hampton University Ministers Conference, The Hymn Society of the United States and Canada, American Choral Directors Association, Shaw University Ministers Conference, and The Association of Partners in Christian Education (PCUSA). Dr. T. led music for the 2022 Montreat Youth Conference and was a service musician and workshop leader for the 2023 Worship and Music Conference sponsored by the Presbyterian Association of Musicians. He has curated and led worship for the American Baptist Home Mission Societies' Space for Grace Conference, the Forum for Theological Exploration, The Black Theology and Leadership Institute at Princeton Theological Seminary, Faith Coordinating Center at Wake Forest School of Divinity, The Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference, The National Children's Defense Fund, and The Montreat Conference Center. In April of 2024, he was awarded the inaugural "National Treasure Award" by the American Baptist Home Mission Society. He is a former member and assistant director of the renowned recording group Donald Lawrence & The Tri-City Singers.

Dr. Tony earned a bachelor of music education degree from Appalachian State University, with an emphasis in piano and choral music; a master's degree in choral conducting from Florida State University (Tallahassee, FL); and a doctorate of worship studies from The Robert Webber Institute for Worship Studies (Jacksonville, FL). His dissertation is entitled, "From Funeral to Feast: Renewing The Celebration of Holy Communion Through Congregational Singing in African American Baptist Church, Charlotte, North Carolina." His article "Lift Every Voice and Sing: Forming Congregations for Justice" is featured in the Augusts 2021 edition of CALL TO WORSHIP: LITURGY, MUSIC, PREACHING, AND THE ARTS, a journal published by the Presbyterian Church USA. He published "Hiding in Plain Sight: A Reflection on Leading Worship" for INSIGHTS: THE FACULTY JOURNAL OF AUSTIN PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY (Austin, TX). He also contributed to "Going to Wait: African American Church Worship Resources—Pentecost through Advent" and "Waiting to Go: African American Church Worship Resources—Advent through Pentecost," by James Abbingtion and Linda Hollies (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2002 and 2003). In 2016, Dr. McNeill was also profiled in the acclaimed BET.com documentary, "Holler If You Hear Me: Black and Gay in the Church," created and directed by Clay Cane. In 2016, he composed an original hymn text, dedicated to the congregation of The Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, entitled, "Our God Who Art in Heaven," a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer set to the hymn tune NETTLETON.



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Business Spotlight

By Denise Thurman

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Desi L. Campbell

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The mission is to empower, educate, and enlighten the African American community with the tools and resources to explore and celebrate the rich African American history of our ancestors in Harnett and surrounding Counties.

www.africanamericanexperience.org
Harnett County African American Heritage Tour
910-882-3851

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Meet the Brandher
Miss Co

Hello!
I am excited that you have decided to start a business! I am a creative graphic designer and I want to help you bring your business vision to life! I am a certified business owner and I can help you start, brand or market your business using simple digital concepts!

My Experience
I am very tech savvy! I always had a natural gift of making things look better. I have been designing and creating for several years!

My Education
I have a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a Master's degree in Psychology. I have also attended free business courses/webinars!

Book a consult with me by texting 984-664-4481
For more information email me at cornelliamalloys@gmail.com

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