

POLITICAL GRAB BAG

By Steve Bagby, Sr., Political Action Committee Chair

HAPPY FATHER'S DAY TO ALL OF THE WONDERFUL MEN OF SECOND

BAPTIST CHURCH who lead our congregation in a variety of ways and those who have helped to keep us centered, focused and spiritually uplifted during this past year as we have all dealt with and continue to deal with the pandemic crisis. We are grateful for the leadership of Pastor William S. Epps, Dr. Ernest Young, Dr. Bill Elkins, III and Dr. Lorn Foster, and for our Sunday School teachers and participants who have helped to keep us spiritually enlightened, including Terry Martin, Tommy Sewell, Jimmie Johnson, Gordon Pierce, Howard Alston, Henry Purnell, Perry Singleton, Sam Williams, Leonard Smith and Judge Matthews, to name a few. We acknowledge the outstanding men on the Social Media Committee who have helped to give us a “digital presence” in the City and who have helped us to stay together and able to communicate with each other by using a variety of social media platforms. We acknowledge the dedicated men on the Trustee Board who have helped to oversee the upkeep of the church in a myriad of ways as we know that, notwithstanding the fact that we were out of our historic structure, the financial affairs and issues associated with the maintenance of the Church were ongoing. We extend Father’s Day greetings and thanks to all of the men in the Church who have generously supported the Church in a financial manner and those who have participated in the Zoom calls on selected topics, Prayer Sessions, Bible Study and the Pastor’s Chat, as well as on other committees and commissions not referenced above, as everyone has helped to keep the congregation sustained, vibrant and engaged during this past year. Bottom line, as I stated initially. . . . **HAPPY FATHER’S DAY TO ALL OF THE WONDERFUL MEN OF SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH!!**

June is also MEN’S HEALTH MONTH - Throughout June, Men’s Health Month aims to encourage men and boys to take charge of their overall health by implementing healthy living decisions by eating correctly, exercising, getting regular checkups and being aware of the risks for their age, ethnicity and lifestyle.

During Men’s Health Month, men are urged to take steps to enrich their health and wellness through proper screenings and care. **We want all of our fantastic men of Second Baptist Church to take care of their health so that we can continue to joyously celebrate them!** More information about Men’s Health Month may be obtained by accessing the following organizations and websites: **Men’s Health Network** (www.menshealthnetwork.org; menshealthmonth.org/week.html), and the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health** (www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov/default.aspx).

JUNETEENTH – June 19th -

We all probably know some of the history associated with Juneteenth, but for your perusal, I have included an article that is part of the June 2021 Newsletter prepared by the **Association of Black City Attorneys** that discusses the Proclamation freeing the slaves and how the celebration of Juneteenth began:

“The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.” –“ General Orders Number 3, Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger, Galveston, Texas, June 19, 1865.”

“It was two and one-half years after the Emancipation Proclamation became law that slaves in the confederacy of Texas (some 250,000+) learned they were “freed.” Maj. Gen. Granger and Union troops traveled to the confederate state with this news, and it was less than well-received. Many slave owners continued with terroristic violence toward any former slave who dared follow the decree. With historic resolve, determination, resilience and some assistance from the Freedmen’s Bureau, Blacks – within one year – turned this tumultuous time into one of celebration, and it was one of the first and supremely

influential grass roots efforts for the right to be Free which was first celebrated on June 19, 1866. With celebration thwarted from the onset, Blacks held onto Juneteenth through Jim Crow, the migration West, despite continued violent victimization, in private (and safe) community-funded meeting spaces, and notwithstanding a lack of written historical accountings in schoolbooks across the nation. It wasn't until after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., [in 1968] more than 100 years later, that Juneteenth went beyond Texas and western states, and weaved itself into the Black American tapestry of the southern and mid-west United States. In June 1979, Texas became the first state to make Juneteenth a holiday. Forty-one states and the District of Columbia have since followed suit. As "We" reflect on Juneteenth, let "Us" call on one another to move past the sense of surviving and thrive. Let "Us" be reminded that despite the most abhorrent attempts at silencing "Us," at extinguishing "Our Light," "We" have persevered. Better yet, "We" have remembered who "We" are and where "We" come from, grieved, made ourselves known, led the collective, excelled, chosen wellness and community, and celebrated "Our" pain and "Our" joy. May we hold onto these truths as we march forward for our inalienable civil and human rights!" I think that says it all!!!

GRADUATION - WORDS OF MOTIVATION TO OUR GRADUATES BASED ON THE ACTIONS OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS -

We have several young members who have graduated or will be graduating this year and we extend our congratulations to them. It is within the context of motivating the graduates that I want to share an interesting article forwarded to me by our own historian, **Dr. Lorn Foster**. "*Letters from an American*" is a Newsletter written by Heather Cox Richardson on various topics which explore what it means, and what it has meant, to be an American. Ms. Richardson is an American historian and professor of history at Boston College, where she teaches courses on the American Civil War, the Reconstruction Era, the American West and the Plains Indians. She previously taught history at MIT and the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The article was written on May 23, 2021, about

Frederick Douglass and includes her thoughts about what she would tell graduating students to do based on the life of **Frederick Douglass**.

“Frederick Douglass wrote his autobiography three times, but to protect the people who helped him run away from enslavement, he did not explain how he had managed to get away until the last version.”

“Douglass escaped from slavery in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1838. In his twenty years of life, he had a series of masters, some kind, some harsh and one who almost killed him. But by 1838, he was a skilled worker in the local shipyards, earning good money for his master and enjoying a measure of freedom, as well as protection. He had good friends in the area and had fallen in love with the woman who would become his wife.”

“It was enslavement, but within that existence, it was a pretty good position. His peers in the cotton fields of the Deep South were beaten like animals, their deaths by violence unremarkable [to the slave master]. Douglass himself had come close to being "sold down the river"—a term that referred to the slave convoys that traveled down the Mississippi River from older, worn out lands in the East to fresh, raw lands in Mississippi and Louisiana—and he knew that being forced to labor on a plantation in the Deep South would kill him.”

“His relatively safe position would have been enough for a lot of people. They would have thanked God for their blessings and stayed put. In 1838, Frederick Douglass was no different than they were: an unknown slave, hoping to get through each day. Like them, he might have accepted his conditions and disappeared into the past, leaving the status quo unchanged. But he refused.”

“His scheme for escaping to freedom was ridiculously easy. In the days of slavery, free black sailors carried documents with them to prove to southern authorities that they were free, so they could move from northern and foreign ports to southern ports without being detained. These were the days before photos, so officials described the man listed on the free papers as they saw him: his color, distinguishing marks, scars. Douglass worked in shipyards and met a

sailor whose free papers might [provide a] cover [for] Douglass . . . if the white official who looked at them didn't look too closely [at the physical description. Risking his own freedom, that sailor lent Douglass his papers.”

“To escape from slavery, all Douglass had to do was board a train. That's it: he just had to step on a train. If he were lucky, and the railroad conductor didn't catch him, and no one recognized him and called him out, he could be free. But if he were caught, he would be sold down river, almost certainly to his death.”

“To me, Douglass’ decision to step aboard that train is everything. How many of us would have taken that risk, especially knowing that even in the best case, success would mean trying to build a new life, far away from everyone we had ever known? Douglass’ step . . . meant the difference between life and death, the difference between a forgotten, enslaved shipyard worker and the great Frederick Douglass, who went on to become a powerful voice for American liberty.”

“Tomorrow, my students will graduate, and every year, students ask me if I have any advice for them as they leave college or university, advice I wish I had at their age. The answer is yes, after all these years of living and of studying history, I have one piece of advice: When the day comes that you have to choose between what is just good enough and what is right... find the courage to step on the train.”

As I reflect on Ms. Richardson’s commentary, **Frederick Douglass’** brave decision changed his life and the lives of many others through his anti-slavery oratory and writings. One of his famous quotes that showed the depth of his desire to end slavery was a statement he made when questioned about some of those with whom he interfaced: *"I would unite with anybody to do right and with nobody to do wrong."* (goodreads.com) As an advocate for women’s rights and specifically the right of women to vote, Douglass’ legacy as an author and leader lives on. His work served as an inspiration to the civil rights movement of the 1960s and beyond. (www.history.com) As Heather Cox

Richardson stated above. . . . graduates . . . **remember to “step on the train.”**

TASK FORCE ON SLAVERY REPARATIONS –

We previously focused on Juneteenth in 1865 as the date the slaves in Texas were made aware that slavery was abolished and on **Frederick Douglass** who escaped slavery in 1838. Fast forward to 2020/2021, where now, the State of California is beginning to consider compensation and other potential remedies for descendants of enslaved people and those affected by slavery. **Secretary of State Dr. Shirley Weber**, who formerly served four terms as an Assembly Member representing California's 79th Assembly District, which includes parts of the City of San Diego as well as surrounding cities and communities, introduced a bill last year (AB 3121) to create a ***“Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States.”*** (*L. A. Times* Newspaper, June 2, 2021.) Secretary of State Weber stated “the law, which was signed in 2020, forces California to come to terms with its role in slavery.” The first meeting of the task force took place on June 1st. Per the **L.A. Times** article, the Task Force has been “tasked” to: **1)** Examine slavery that existed in the United States, discrimination in the public and private sectors against those who were enslaved and their descendants, and the lingering negative effect of the institution of slavery; **2)** Recommend ways to educate the public on its findings and to recommend remedies; **3)** Recommend how California will issue a formal apology, how to eliminate discrimination in existing state laws and how to establish new programs, policies or projects to address the group’s findings; and **4)** Determine how any potential compensation should be calculated and who would be eligible, as well as additional forms of rehabilitation or restitution. AB 3121 provides that “state level reparations should not be seen as a replacement for any future remedies from the federal government.” **The Task Force consists of nine members, two of whom are very well known to us: Our own Reginald Jones Sawyer, Assemblyman (D-Los Angeles),** chair of the Public Safety Committee and the Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color, and **Steven Bradford, Senator (D -Gardena),** chair of the California

Legislative Black Caucus and chair of the Committee on Public Safety. AB 3121 requires the Task Force to submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the Legislature within one year of its first meeting and states that it is in effect until July 1, 2023, at which time it is automatically repealed. That repeal provision is indeed interesting as AB 3121 requires a lot of work to be done in a relatively short period of time. The comparable federal provision, H.R. 40, is a decades-old bill that was first introduced by Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., **in 1989**. It is entitled, ***The Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act***. It finally moved out of the House Judiciary Committee for the first time in April 2021, potentially setting up a floor vote on the legislation.

SEVERAL CASES BEFORE THE U.S. SUPREME COURT-- IN JUNE -

Three Cases and Three Questions -

Per the June 1, 2021, ***New York Times*** online news report entitled ***“The Morning,”*** by David Leonhardt and Adam Liptak, June is the peak season for Supreme Court decisions. It is the final month of the court’s annual term and the Justices tend to save their biggest decisions for the term’s end.

Leonhardt and Liptak put this guide together, which starts with three thematic questions about the term, followed by a more detailed look at three of the biggest expected rulings. The entire discussion below is taken from ***“The Morning”*** online news report.

Three Big Questions

What will we learn about Amy Coney Barrett, the newest justice? She is clearly conservative. It is less clear whether she will be almost uniformly so — as, say, Samuel Alito is — or whether she will look for opportunities to compromise and burnish the court’s preferred image as a nonpartisan institution. The latter approach is the one that Chief Justice John Roberts sometimes chooses.

What about Brett Kavanaugh, the second-newest justice? In his first three years on the court, he has shown some signs of being in the Roberts camp. The

approach that Kavanaugh and Barrett take is crucial because the three liberal justices now need at least two of the six conservatives to form a majority. Before the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the liberals needed only one conservative.

Will there be any big surprises this month — or is this the quiet before the storm? As you'll see below, most court watchers think there is one likely outcome for each of the major cases. But next year's term, which will start in the fall, may be less predictable, with cases on abortion (which may impact ***Roe v. Wade***), guns and perhaps affirmative action.

Case No. 1: Obamacare

The 2010 health care law — also known as Obamacare — is before the court yet again, in a case known as ***California v. Texas***. As in the earlier cases, conservative lawyers and state officials are asking the Supreme Court Justices to invalidate the law.

Background: In 2012, the court upheld the law's health-insurance mandate on the grounds that it was a tax and that Congress clearly has the authority to levy taxes. Since then, Congress and President Donald Trump, reduced the amount of the tax to zero. As a result, the conservative lawyers argue that the mandate is no longer a tax and no longer constitutional — and that the entire law should be thrown out. While the details get technical, based on their questions during oral arguments in November, it seems that the Justices appear unlikely to invalidate the law. The repeated rulings upholding Obamacare help to polish the court's image: A Republican-dominated court gets multiple chances to uphold the same Democratic accomplishment.

Case No. 2: Voting Rights

Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee has been called the most important voting rights case in almost a decade.

The narrow outcome seems all but certain: The court's conservative majority will uphold two Arizona measures. One requires election officials to discard ballots

cast at the wrong precinct; the other makes “ballot harvesting” — the collection of ballots for delivery to polling places — a crime in most circumstances.

The larger question is whether the ruling will be so broad that it will also effectively endorse new voting laws that states have passed this year. Since Trump lost re-election last year and falsely blamed fraud for his defeat, several states have passed laws in the name of enhancing election security. Those laws are a mixture of provisions, including partisan provisions intended to make voting more difficult, especially in heavily Democratic areas.

The Roberts court has generally sided with Republican state officials when they have restricted voting access. That is not a good sign!

Case No. 3: Religion vs. Gay Rights

Like many cities, Philadelphia uses private contractors to screen potential foster parents. One of those contractors, a Catholic social services agency, has asked for the right not to place children with same-sex couples. Philadelphia has said that all contractors must follow the city’s anti-discrimination policies.

The crucial question in ***Fulton v. City of Philadelphia***, is whether same-sex couples deserve the same protection against discrimination as racial minorities — or whether religious groups can define marriage as being only between a woman and a man.

The Justices’ questions during oral arguments seemed to point to a ruling in favor of the Catholic agency, Adam says. That would restrict the impact of the 2015 ruling establishing a right to same-sex marriage, making clear that L.G.B.T.Q. Americans could not expect the same protections as other groups. It would also raise questions about whether the newly conservative court might one day revisit that 2015 ruling.

Future Case Before The U.S. Supreme Court –

In a case that can impact the decision set forth in ***Roe v. Wade***, the Supreme Court has recently decided to hear the case of ***Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization***, which challenges the State of Mississippi’s ban on most abortions

after 15 weeks of pregnancy. It took nearly a year for the Supreme Court to agree to hear the case challenging the law's constitutionality, which decision drew cheers from anti-abortion groups and alarm from others. While the Supreme Court recently decided to hear the case, it will not be argued before the Court until the fall term of 2021, which begins in October.

Mississippi's law could have profound implications for abortion rights because by setting a date after which abortions are no longer permitted, the state challenges the viability standard set forth in *Roe v. Wade*, which guarantees women a right to an abortion before a fetus can survive outside the womb. Abortion rights groups say that if a 15-week ban is permitted, why not a 10-week ban, a six-week ban or a prohibition at conception? "Roe's viability line is arbitrary," the state's attorneys told the lower court last year. "It makes little sense to say a state has no interest in protecting the infant's life." This is definitely a case that we must follow closely.

ELECTION RESULTS –

54th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT- On **May 28, 2021**, educator and community organizer **Isaac Bryan** was sworn into the California Assembly **after winning a special election on May 18th**, to represent the 54th District. The 54th Assembly District consists of Baldwin Hills, Cheviot Hills, the Crenshaw district, Century City, Culver City, Ladera Heights, Mar Vista, Palms, Rancho Park, Westwood and parts of South Los Angeles and Inglewood. Bryan had 49.62% of the vote according to semi-official results released election night, but a count of nearly 8,000 previously unprocessed ballots completed on May 21st raised his total to **50.78%, making him the winner in the six-candidate field without a runoff**. Bryan was endorsed by our own member, Alex Johnson, Program Director at the California Wellness Foundation, as well as Los Angeles County Supervisors and Los Angeles City Councilpersons. The special election was necessitated by Sydney Kamlager's election to the state Senate in a special election March 2, filling the vacancy

caused by Holly Mitchell's election to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in November. Bryan co-chaired the campaign on behalf of Measure J, the charter amendment approved by voters in November requiring that a minimum of 10% of Los Angeles County's unrestricted general funds be spent on housing, mental health treatment, jail diversion programs and other alternatives to incarceration. We look forward to following his progress in the California Assembly.

CITY OF COMPTON – MAYOR - The runoff election for Mayor of Compton was held on **June 1st**. Per the Los Angeles County Recorder's Office, as of June 3rd, **Councilwoman Emma Sharif was leading in the ballot count at 54.07%** versus 45.93% for Cristian Reynaga. They are both vying to replace outgoing Mayor Aja Brown, who did not seek re-election after being in office since 2013. Emma Sharif is a 30-year resident of Compton who was elected to represent the 4th District of the Compton City Council in 2015. Before that, she served as a Compton Unified School District Board Member. **The next time the vote count will be updated will be June 4th, after this article is submitted, so the percentages and outcome may change.** Results of other elections held on June 1st for the City of Compton as well as for other jurisdictions may be obtained by accessing the L.A. County Registrar-Recorder's Office website at lavote.net/home/voting.

UPCOMING ELECTIONS – SAN MARINO

On **June 29, 2021**, those of you who live in the San Marino will be voting on a Unified School District Special Parcel Tax ballot measure to protect the quality of education and continue San Marino's tradition of community support for local schools, by renewing its expiring education parcel tax for six years, with annual inflation adjustments, exemptions for seniors and all funds staying local. Further details regarding this ballot measure may be found at lavote.net/home/voting ... under the category, Upcoming Elections.

In closing, as we focus on Father's Day, we can't help but think about George Floyd and all the other men and father's who lost their lives at the hands of the police or via other means of oppression, including those men, as well as women, who were killed in the Tulsa, Oklahoma Massacre in 1821, the Wilmington, North Carolina Coup/Massacre in 1898, and the Rosewood, Florida Massacre in 1923. We have suffered a great deal as a people over the years, however, knowing our history helps us to remain vigilant and focused so as to do everything within our power to prevent those same dynamics from continually repeating themselves. Black Lives Matter is not just a slogan but indeed a reality! This current climate harkens back to the days of the past as "they" try to turn back the hands of time. However, we must do our part to resist their concerted efforts. Let us be mindful of all that we have suffered . . . while at the same time . . . being mindful of what we have achieved, so we can continue to go forward and advance our cause, while having history as our guiding, as well as our motivating force! Let us all do our part!

Thank you for reading!
(June 2021)