

Political Grab Bag

By Steve Bagby, Sr., Political Action Committee Chair

With all of the negative news that we are bombarded with daily, be it political, social or criminal, **AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH**, celebrated this month of February 2022, provides us with an opportunity to focus on the positive aspects of our collective experiences and celebrate the accomplishments of those who preceded us, those who are currently making us proud and those who are learning the lessons of history and will continue to fight for our rights.

We don't have to look far to find a bright light to lift our spirits because our wonderful Church leadership, as well as its members, have been a beacon of light in the civil rights movement throughout the years. Second Baptist Church has a rich history on which to focus, which is well-documented on our Church's website under History/Timeline of Historic Events (secondbaptistchurchla.org). Historical facts relating to our Church and its role in the history of the African American Community are also documented on several other websites, including **Los Angeles Conservancy** (laconservancy.org/locations/second-baptist-church), **Paul Revere Williams Project** (paulrwilliamsproject.org/gallery/1920s-churches/), **Wikipedia** ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Baptist_Church_\(Los_Angeles\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Baptist_Church_(Los_Angeles))) and recently on the **National Park Service** website (nps.gov/articles/000/california-second-baptist-church-los-angeles-htm). Per the **National Park Service** website, "*Second Baptist Church in Los Angeles, California became part of the African American Civil Rights Network in February 2021.*" "**The African American Civil Rights Network** recognizes the civil rights movement in the United States and the sacrifices made by those who fought against discrimination and segregation. Created by the **African American Civil Rights Act of 2017**, and coordinated by the National Park Service, the **Network** tells the stories of the people, places and events of the U.S. civil rights movement through a collection of public and private elements."

I encourage you to access these websites and "refresh" your memory about the great role our Church, its leadership and members have had throughout the

years. Becoming a part of the ***African American Civil Rights Network in February 2021*** is a recognition of the fact that our Church is still in the forefront and that **our current Church leadership and its members** continue to do the work necessary to address the social and political issues of the day. We have a preeminent and nationally known Pastor, **Dr. William S. Epps**, who very ably keeps the social issues of the day in the forefront, being mindful about how these issues impact the political dynamics in society. We have church members who work to keep the local community and beyond aware of the need to participate and make their voices heard by, amongst other means, voting so as to be able to continually effectuate change. The Church body is encouraged to maintain its membership in civil rights organizations which advocate for the rights of our people locally and nationally. We remain a very active church, indeed, even in light of the pandemic! Yes, we continue to be a beacon of light of hope and resolve in the local community and beyond, and for that, we can be proud! Our thanks go to all of you who do the work to keep us in the forefront which allows others to “see us” and choose to acknowledge us as we have recently been acknowledged in 2021 by the ***African American Civil Rights Network***, which, as stated before, “recognizes the civil rights movement in the United States and the sacrifices made by those who fought against discrimination and segregation.”

In further focusing on our Church’s role in the civil rights movement, Dr. Lorn Foster recently shared an article written in 2020 by Alicia Di Rado, one of the Assistant Vice-Presidents of the University of Southern California (USC), that references, among other things, Second Baptist Church and its relationship with Dr. Martin Luther King during his travels to Los Angeles. The article, entitled: ***“Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Moments and Mission in Los Angeles,”*** includes a lead-in stating that: “The civil rights leader visited USC and its surrounding neighborhoods throughout the late ’50s and ’60s in his quest to improve the lives of Black Americans.” The article, amongst other things, focuses on Dr. King’s relationship with Dr. Thomas Kilgore, Jr., “a longtime friend of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Pastor at Second Baptist Church in Los Angeles . . . [who] helped the civil rights leader spread his message in Southern California.” While most of us know that Dr. King considered Second Baptist Church his “West Coast home,” where he

spoke several times, the article references that Dr. King “gave a guest sermon at Second Baptist Church on Griffith Avenue and 24th Street, about a mile east of the University Park Campus. Among his topics: the importance of avoiding hatred and violence in the quest for civil rights, and the relevance of the church to the movement. He often visited the site — Los Angeles’ oldest African American [Baptist] church.” “Second Baptist Church’s pastor, Rev. Thomas Kilgore, Jr., was . . . an important catalyst for King’s involvement in Los Angeles. Kilgore, who had helped organize the historic civil rights March on Washington, D.C., in 1963, also helped establish the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s Los Angeles office, the only chapter west of the Rockies. He later became deeply involved in the campus community as director of the USC Office of Community Affairs. He served as advisor to three university presidents and established USC’s Black Alumni Association, which offered scholarships to minority students.” It is noted that many of our Church’s archives are housed at USC. The article, which includes a lot of information about Dr. King’s travels to Los Angeles over and beyond the reference to Second Baptist Church, is very interesting and I encourage you to read it. It can be found at <https://news.usc.edu/trojan-family/martin-luther-king-usc-los-angeles-moments-and-mission/> Thank you Dr. Foster!

Yes, Second Baptist, with its stellar leadership and membership, has been and continues to be active and involved in advancing the various causes that are important to our local community and the nation. Let us make every effort to teach/remind our youth about our history so, they, too, can be buoyed by our accomplishments despite many odds and advance the causes that are so important to our existence as a people.

A good place for the youth to start and for adults to study is the book entitled ***The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story***, by Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Nikole Hannah-Jones. Per the website, *1619.com*, ***The 1619 Project*** speaks directly to our current moment, contextualizing the systems of race and caste that still define so much of American life today. It reveals the hidden truths around our nation’s founding and construction—and the way that the legacy of slavery did not end with emancipation, but continues to shape contemporary American life.” A corresponding book for children entitled: ***The 1619 Project: Born to the***

Water,” written by Nikole Hannah-Jones and Newberry honor-winning author, Renee Watson, with illustrations by Nikkolas Smith, is described as “a lyrical picture book in verse which chronicles the consequences of slavery and the history of Black resistance in the United States.” In the book, “a young student receives a family tree assignment in school, but she can only trace back three generations. Her grandmother gathers the whole family, and the student learns that 400 years ago, in 1619, their ancestors were stolen and brought to America by white slave traders, but before that, they had a home, a land, a language. She learns how the people said to be born on the water survived.” As stated by Doyin Richards, a children’s author in his November 2021 review of the illustrated children’s book, “maybe you’re thinking this story is too harsh for children aged 7 to 10, but I would argue the opposite. On an individual level, this is the exact story kids need to know about so it can inspire them to greatness—especially Black kids. When things become difficult for these children (and they *will* become difficult for them), they can be inspired by their ancestors’ determination to thrive. Systemic racism is a virulent reality, but kids also need to develop a sense of agency grounded in the stories they tell themselves about who they are. ***Born on the Water***, with its narrative of pain and perseverance, forthrightness and freedom, can be an anchor for them in their own hard moments.”

Mr. Richards further stated: “America is in the middle of a culture war in which many of its citizens want schools to ignore the truth about racism and slavery, leaving many Black children feeling confused and ashamed in and out of the classroom. The context is critical to remember as the coverage and reception of ***Born on the Water*** will be influenced by debates over how race and American history should be taught in schools. But ignorance of this ‘hard history,’ as the teacher’s guide calls it, does no children any favors. I believe lack of education is a major reason why racism is still alive today, and ***Born on the Water*** is a powerful tool to have at our disposal to rectify it.”

Richards continues by saying “[a]s a children’s author and Black man in America, I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to understand and feel the real story of how Black people came to this country. As I read it, I found myself getting emotional, because I instantly knew how many it will impact in a positive

way — including my two young daughters. My belief is that it will inspire white children to step up to ensure that Black people are treated with kindness, respect, and dignity. It's a process that will take some soul-searching, bravery, and a commitment to being better going forward — exactly what people who want to ban these books resist the most.”

After reading the descriptions of both of these books, Mr. Richards is correct in his assessment that notwithstanding what will happen in the school setting, “every Black parent, and every . . . [person] who hopes to be an anti-racist ally, . . . [should read] and have [these books] available in their library to [learn the correct history associated with the institution of slavery] and to be able to answer and help their children address their “inevitable questions about American history.” We should all purchase and read these books . . . soon!

PRESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITY - RETIREMENT OF SUPREME COURT JUSTICE **STEPHEN BREYER -**

As we focus on African American History Month and all of the accomplishments of those who have preceded us and those who are currently making history, President Joseph Biden has an opportunity to add to the list of those making history by his nomination of a jurist to fill the vacancy that will be created on the U.S. Supreme Court by the retirement of Associate Justice Stephen Breyer. In a letter written to the President on January 27th, Justice Breyer indicated that he will step down at the end of the court's current term [June/July] assuming his successor has been nominated and confirmed.” *Yahoo News (January 27, 2022)*. The next term begins on Oct. 3rd. President Biden has stated that he intends to nominate an African American woman to fill the vacancy. Several names have been discussed, with **Ketanji Brown Jackson** and **Leondra Kruger** seen as two of the most likely contenders.

President Biden nominated **Ketanji Brown Jackson**, 51, to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit last summer. Ms. **Jackson** had served as a District Judge in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia since 2013, previously working as a Public Defender, the Vice Chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission and as a clerk for Justice Breyer and two other federal judges. She attended Harvard University as an undergraduate and a law student, serving as an editor for the Harvard Law Review. **Jackson** was confirmed to her current post by

the Senate in a 53-44 vote, with Republican Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina voting in her favor. Centrist Democratic Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, who've been at loggerheads with the White House on a number of key issues, were also yes votes on **Jackson** last year. *Yahoo News* (January 26, 2022)

Leondra Kruger, 45, is an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of California. Having previously served in the Office of the Solicitor General during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama presidencies, she argued 12 cases in the U.S. Supreme Court. She previously clerked for former Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens and for a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. Then-California Gov. Jerry Brown, a Democrat, appointed **Ms. Kruger** to the state Supreme Court in 2014 when she was 38 years old. **Kruger** is from California and attended Harvard as an undergraduate, followed by Yale University as a law student, serving as editor in chief of the Yale Law Journal. “**Leondra Kruger** is one of the handful of the most brilliant attorneys with whom I’ve ever worked,” Neal Katyal, who was Acting Solicitor General during Obama’s first term, told the L.A. Times in 2020. “I asked her to be my principal Deputy Solicitor General because I knew the advice she’d give me would be meticulous and deeply thought out, and most of all, honest: I cannot imagine a better justice.” *Yahoo News* (January 26, 2022)

There is also J. Michelle Childs, 55, who has served on the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina for more than a decade. President Biden unexpectedly nominated her last month to serve on the high-profile D.C. Circuit, surprising Washington-area lawyers who had anticipated a pick with local ties.

Ms. Childs served in state government on the Workers’ Compensation Commission and was Deputy Director of South Carolina’s Department of Labor. She was born in Detroit and moved to South Carolina as a teen and has said she was the first Black female partner in a major law firm in the state. She holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from state schools in Florida and South Carolina and is a favorite of one of Biden’s most influential congressional allies, House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn (D-S.C.). *Washington Post* (January 27, 2022) **Childs** faced a confirmation hearing on January 10th for her nomination to the D.C. Circuit, however, as stated by White House Deputy Press Secretary Andrew Bates, “Judge Childs is among multiple individuals under consideration for the Supreme Court . . . [a]nd we are not going to move her nomination on the Court of Appeals while the President is considering her for this vacancy.” *ABC News* (February 2, 2022)

Per the ***Washington Post (January 27, 2022)***, others under possible consideration for the Supreme Court position include **Anita Earls**, 61, a North Carolina Supreme Court Justice elected to the position in 2019, who, prior to her position there, was appointed by President Bill Clinton as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department in 1998. She has a Yale Law School degree.

There is New York University Constitutional Law Professor **Melissa Murray**, 46, who is an authority on reproductive rights and family law. She clerked for Justice Sonia Sotomayor when Justice Sotomayor served on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit. **Ms. Murray** is a close observer of the Supreme Court, and regularly comments about the justices as an MSNBC contributor and through a podcast with others called Strict Scrutiny. She has written two books about reproductive rights, and was previously on the faculty of the University of California's Berkeley Law School, where she served as Interim Dean.

There is also Minnesota Federal District Judge **Wilhelmina "Mimi" Wright**. **Ms. Wright**, 58, was appointed a Federal Judge in 2016 by President Obama. Prior to that appointment, she served on the Minnesota Supreme Court. She was the state's first Black female justice. She is described as the only jurist in the state's history to serve on the state District Court, Appellate Court and state Supreme Court. She is a graduate of Yale University and Harvard Law School.

Further, according to ***Spectrum News – NY 1 (February 2, 2022)***, two other African American women may be under consideration as well. **Leslie Abrams Gardner** is the sister of Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams, who has been a U.S. District Court Judge in Georgia since 2014, appointed by President Obama. Prior to that appointment, she served as a Federal Prosecutor in Georgia. Ms. Gardner, 47, graduated from Brown University and Yale Law School.

Sherrylin Ifill has also been mentioned. **Ms. Ifill**, 59, is one of the country's best-known civil rights attorneys, having led the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund since 2013. In November 2021, she announced that she would step down as the organization's President and Director-Counsel

beginning in the spring of 2022. **Ifill** has also served as a Law Professor at the University of Maryland and Fellow at the American Civil Liberties Union. A New York City native, **Ifill** graduated from Vassar College and New York University School of Law.

This current list of potential candidates includes quite a group of distinguished and accomplished women. President Biden has a vast array of talent from which to choose the nominee. This will indeed be an historic nomination as well as an historic confirmation. He has assembled a team who will evaluate all the candidates. The fact that this process will take place in part during African American History Month is especially gratifying, indeed. We eagerly await his selection.

AUTUMN BURKE RESIGNS FROM THE 62ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT –

While we have several African American women in consideration for a position on the highest court in the land, locally, we have an African American woman who is leaving a position of influence. On February 1, 2022, **Autumn Burke**, a Democrat who served the 62nd California Assembly District consisting of Inglewood, Hawthorne, Lawndale, El Segundo, Gardena, the Los Angeles neighborhoods of Westchester, Playa del Rey, Playa Vista, Venice, and the unincorporated communities of Del Aire, West Athens, Lennox, Westmont and Marina del Rey, resigned from her position, having served for just over seven years after being elected in 2014. **Ms. Burke** indicated that she was resigning to “spend more time with her family.” *L.A. Sentinel* (February 3, 2022) “The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the lives and consciousnesses of everyone, and I am no exception,” Burke wrote. “After 7 years of serving as your Assemblymember, my hope was to finish out my term, but circumstances have recently changed.” **Burke**, who was the chair of the influential Revenue and Taxation Committee, is the daughter of former Assemblywoman, Congresswoman and County Supervisor Yvonne Braithwaite Burke and William Burke, a former Chairman of the South Coast Air Quality Management District Governing Board.

Per Mike Sanchez, a spokesperson for Los Angeles County Registrar’s Office, “[t]he Governor will establish the dates for the vacancy per provisions in the State Constitution and Elections Code.” In fact, on February 3rd, the Governor set the

special election date for June 7, 2022, with the primary being held on April 5, 2022. Burke's departure means "there are now five empty seats in the State Assembly, its highest number of concurrent vacancies in decades, according to legislative historian Alex Vassar at the California State Library." *Associated Press* (February 1, 2022). Along with Autumn Burke, "former Assemblymembers David Chiu, Jim Frazier, Ed Chau and Lorena Gonzalez have already resigned. All left for new jobs, including Chiu who was selected as the next City Attorney for San Francisco, Frazier who left for a transportation industry job, Gonzalez who will become the next head of the California Labor Federation, and Chau (49th Assembly District) who was appointed by Governor Newsom to become a Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge." *California Globe* (February 2, 2022). The primary election for the 49th Assembly District seat vacated by Ed Chau will be held February 15th, with the general election held April 19th. *Hey So Cal* (December 10, 2021). The District includes Alhambra, Arcadia, El Monte, Monterey Park, Rosemead, San Gabriel, San Marino, Temple City, and parts of Montebello and South El Monte. Mike Fong is the Democratic candidate running to fill that seat and Burton Brink is the Republican candidate. For those of you who live in the 49th Assembly District, make sure you vote on February 15th. We are already mindful of the potential for problems associated with the Democrats retaining a majority in the U.S. Congress in the mid-term elections taking place in November 2022, and now, although the Democrats should maintain their majority in the State Assembly, there is always the possibility that the Republicans can gain a few seats due to the sheer number of resignations, thus, we should all work hard to ensure that the Democratic majorities on both the national and local levels prevail.

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH EVENTS –

There are many events happening throughout the Los Angeles area . . . some in person and some virtually.

**One website that lists several events of interest is: <https://momsla.com/20-ways-celebrate-black-history-month-around-los-angeles/> Access this website for selected events.

**The February 3rd edition of the *L.A. Sentinel* also references various events scheduled throughout the month. Access their website at <https://lasentinel.net/epaper/february-3-2022?bwmqsvlnopw>

****The Kinsey African American Art and History Collection at So Fi Stadium** - An activity that we can enjoy in person is viewing the vast art collection amassed by the Kinsey Family that will be on display at SoFi Stadium beginning on February 23, 2022.

When: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Thursdays-Mondays starting Feb. 23

Where: SoFi Stadium, 1001 Stadium Drive, Inglewood

Tickets: \$15 ages 16-and-older; \$12 ages 5-15; \$12 students, seniors, active military and Inglewood residents with I.D.; Tickets, group rates and more are available at sofistadium.com/kinsey. Parking is free.

By way of background, per an article in the ***Daily Breeze*** (January 28, 2022), Bernard and Shirley Kinsey settled into a house off Crenshaw Boulevard in Inglewood in the early 1970s. The couple, who met while attending Florida A&M University, shared a passion for traveling and collecting art. Through the years, the Kinseys amassed a sizable collection of art and artifacts that has turned into a touring exhibition known as The Kinsey African American Art & History Collection.

After traveling to 35 cities across the United States and around the world over the past 15 years, the exhibition is coming back to the area and taking over a floor inside SoFi Stadium at Hollywood Park, less than a mile from the Kinsey's first family home. "It's a full-circle moment for us," Shirley Kinsey said during a walk-through of the exhibition, which is set to open to the public as a ticketed event on Feb. 23 and includes one-hour self-guided [or VIP guided] tours . . . through April 2022. It really feels like we're coming back home."

****Taste of Inglewood –Big Game Festival** – Per their flyer, on February 10th – 12th (Thursday and Friday from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.), at Downtown Market Street (from Regent St. to Hillcrest Blvd.), the City of Inglewood will be hosting "a free music packed concert extravaganza featuring Latin, Soul and R&B music, vendors, food trucks, special guests and more!" For information call 310/412-5333 or visit www.cityofinglewood.org. Enjoy!

Thank you for reading!
(February 2022)