

Political Grab Bag

By Steve Bagby, Sr., Political Action Committee Chair

This February, the Political Grab Bag will focus on our Black History and the accomplishments of many noted individuals as we celebrate **Black History Month**. The contributions of Black Americans are celebrated in the United States and throughout the world, including in Canada, Ireland, Germany, Netherlands and the United Kingdom. We have many people and accomplishments to acknowledge and celebrate, including our first Black President, **Barack Obama**; our first Black Vice President, **Kamala Harris**; former Georgia House Minority Leader and voting rights strategist and phenom, **Stacey Abrams**; first Black U.S. Secretary of Defense, **General Lloyd Austin**; Georgia Senator, **Rev. Raphael Warnock**; the new Chair of the Democratic National Committee, **Jamie Harrison** from South Carolina, who ran for Senate against Lindsey Graham; Ohio Representative, **Marcia Fudge**, nominated as Secretary for Housing and Urban Development; US Foreign Service Diplomat, **Linda Thomas-Greenfield**, nominated to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations; economist and Dean of the Princeton University School of Public and International Affairs, **Cecelia Rouse**, nominated to Chair the Council of Economic Advisers; secretary of North Carolina's Department of Environmental Quality, **Michael Regan**, nominated to be the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; our first Black Woman Secretary of State for California, **Dr. Shirley Weber**; and the co-founders of the **Black Lives Matter** movement, **Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi**, which movement has been **nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for 2021** by Norwegian Member of Parliament (MP), Petter Eide, for compelling countries around the world to address systemic racism. MP Eide stated that **Black Lives Matter**: “. . . [I]s a strong linkage between antiracism movements and peace, and a recognition that without this kind of justice, there will be no peace and stability in the society.” He also stated: “Awarding the peace prize to **Black Lives Matter**, as the strongest global force against racial injustice, will send a powerful message that peace is founded on equality, solidarity and human rights, and that all countries must respect those basic principles.” (*axios.com – January 30, 2021*)

We also acknowledge, in memoriam, those who have passed within the past year, including the legendary and venerable Congressman, **John Lewis**; civil rights activists, **Rev. Joseph Lowery, Rev. C.T. Vivian and Rev. James L. Netters**; NASA mathematician, **Katherine Johnson**; N.Y Mayor, **David Dinkins**; businessman, **Earl G. Graves, Sr.**; basketball, baseball and football stars, **Kobe and Gianna Bryant, Hank Aaron and Gale Sayers**; singers/musicians, **Bill Withers and Ellis Marsalis, Jr.**; and actors **Janet Dubois, Chadwick Boseman** and our **beloved Cicely Tyson**.

AN ACCOMPLISHED LIFE -

Every year, a theme is chosen by the ***Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)*** for Black History Month, and for 2021 the theme is, ***“The Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity.”*** "The family offers a rich tapestry of images for exploring the African American past and present," as stated by the **ASALH** on their website. In that regard and consistent with the 2021 theme, I want to share some information that I received from one of our own members about a relative in her family who was born in the late 1800s who was active in politics and many other areas of society in the early to mid 1900s. There may be others in our congregation who have done genealogical research on their family and would also like to share information about their family members, so I encourage you to contact me. The timing of the receipt of the family history highlighted below was perfect for Black History Month.

Gail Quarles shared some fascinating information about her Great-Great-Grand aunt, **Maude B. Dearing Coleman**, who was born in the latter part of the 1800s in Rappahannock County, Virginia, and later moved to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania with her family. A shortened version of the fascinating information Gail shared is set forth below:

Mrs. Maude B. Coleman, along with her husband and sister's family, settled into an area in Harrisburg called "The Eighth Ward," where the majority of the residents were



racially mixed . . . Blacks, Whites, Jews, Italians, Irish and Germans. While there was a mix of income levels, the majority of the Ward, which covered more than 30 acres of land, consisted of low income housing, tenements, churches, cathedrals, synagogues, stores, small businesses and factories, and local alcohol joints. The Eighth Ward was located near the Pennsylvania State Capitol and White politicians could look out of their windows and see it. Over time, they came to consider the area as a "blighted neighborhood" and an embarrassment if other visiting politicians would see that area, so they got a group of their colleagues to work with them and created a "Capitol Park Extension Committee" as a means of "beautifying" the Capitol grounds. You can only imagine what happened, right? Yes, you guessed it! They passed the Fox Tunis Act of 1911 and decided to ***get rid of the whole Ward***. Between 1911 and 1917, **598 buildings on 30 acres of land, were destroyed for the Capitol Park Extension**. The buildings were purchased by the State and resold for demolition. ***Every structure in the Eighth Ward was destroyed!*** The residents were not notified early in the process that they would need to vacate their properties for the "beautification of the City." Of course, relocation for the Black Ward residents was extremely difficult because there were not many locations in the City open to Blacks, whereas, those of other races could find housing without much difficulty. The whole devastated area was made into a park where people could come and sit on the benches and feed the pigeons and squirrels, which is EXACTLY where Gail's mother would take her and her brother on leisure afternoons to stroll in the "park" and feed the pigeons and squirrels, never knowing what was beneath the park. Gail's mother didn't even know about it as she wasn't born when the Ward was demolished. It was as if once the Ward was gone, no one talked about it any longer. It was truly Pennsylvania's politicians' *well kept secret*... or so they thought! However

Several history professors from Messiah University, not far from Harrisburg, found out about the old Eighth Ward and decided to delve deeper into the story as to what happened with the Ward as well as the residents who previously lived there. They assigned various parts of the research project to their students as a year-long project. A local historian named Lenwood Sloan, along with other historians, focused their energy on deciding upon the names of the people from the Eighth Ward who did the most to help the residents during that time. There were so many historians who wanted to be involved that they were divided into three groups: "The History Detectives," "The Harrisburg Historians," and, because there was so much information related to the accomplishments of Gail's Great-

Great-Grandaunt Maude, the group named themselves, "**The Maude Squad.**" One hundred men and women were later chosen to be honored and, of course, Maude B. Coleman was one of them.

Lenwood Sloan and others felt that there should be some type of tribute paid to the 100 Black leaders of the Eighth Ward who had been selected by the committee, thus, they decided that a monument honoring those 100 Black leaders and residents of the Ward should be erected and placed on the Capitol Park Grounds, just as there were monuments of White residents. Mr. Sloan began working with the Pennsylvania State Senate and House of Representatives and after several years of deliberating, it was voted and moved that the presentation of a monument would be created and that the final unveiling would coincide with the 150th Anniversary of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, which granted suffrage to men, and the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which extended the vote to women. City, County, State organizations and individuals also contributed funds to the commemoration project which took form over several years and, finally, work on the creation of the bronze monument began. A portion of the monument was installed in Capitol Park in August 2020. The monument consists of three full-sized Black men and one Black woman standing around a pedestal. The pedestal includes Maude Coleman's name and the other 99 names of the honorees inscribed on four sides with the top of the pedestal consisting of a miniaturized aerial view of the old Eighth Ward. Two of the figures and the pedestal were placed during the unveiling ceremony in August and the last two figures were placed in November 2020 . . . so now the beautiful bronze structure is complete. ***It is the first monument celebrating Blacks and a woman in Pennsylvania on State Capitol grounds.*** Gail was invited to all kinds of



ceremonies, but because of Covid-19, a lot of the initial plans had to be altered. Fortunately, Gail was able to view the initial unveiling on live Harrisburg television, so she didn't miss much. The Bio highlights all of her accomplishments and

makes it very clear why there was a separate committee, "The Maude Squad,"

devoted to gathering information about her life's work. She was, indeed, a very, very accomplished lady who contributed a lot to the City of Harrisburg, the entire State of Pennsylvania and beyond, as she was, amongst other things, a prominent voice in statewide and national social reform, civil rights activities and anti-lynching efforts. I encourage you to read her Bio.

Gail was fortunate enough to have known and spend time with her Great-Great-Grand aunt periodically until she passed when Gail was nine years old. While Gail did not know the full extent of her involvement in Harrisburg society and beyond as a politician, community organizer, civil rights activist, author, founder of the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA for "Colored Women," etc., etc., "Aunt Maude" treated Gail like her surrogate daughter (having lost her own daughter earlier) and Gail attended many events, including Mother and Daughter Teas, luncheons and special dinners with "Aunt Maude," who dutifully attended Gail's piano recitals! Smile! I thank Gail so much for sharing this wonderful and historical information with us about a Virginia native and Pennsylvania resident who was and is, indeed, **Black History personified! Please review the separate document** of the **Biography of Maude B. Coleman** for the full description of the accomplished life of Mrs. Coleman. You will indeed be enlightened!

Also attached as a separate document is the Black History Month edition of a Newsletter prepared by the ***Association of Black City Attorneys (ABCA)***, which includes information about several Black History notables such as:

Robert Sengstacke Abbot, born in 1870 in Georgia, who studied at Hampton University, received a law degree from Kent State and who in 1905, founded "The Chicago Defender" newspaper, which was the largest circulating Black-owned newspaper in the nation. Langston Hughes, Ida B. Wells and Louis Lomax were some of its contributing writers.

Charlotta Bass, born in 1874 in South Carolina and was the **first Black woman to run for Vice President of the United States in 1952 for the Progressive Party ticket**. She, too, had an interest in journalism and in 1952, with degrees from Ivy League schools Brown University and Columbia University in hand, became the first Black woman owner of a national publication, which she renamed, "The California Eagle."

Honorable Jane M. Bolin, born in 1908 in New York, who was the first Black woman to attend Yale Law School after graduating from Wellesley College, the first Black woman to join the New York State Bar and who, in 1939, after seven years of legal practice, became the first Black woman to serve as a Judge in the United States. Having been appointed by N. Y. Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, she served as the sole Black woman Judge in the nation for 20 years.

We thank the **ABCA** for acknowledging these Black historical figures and encourage you to read the separate attachment for further information on their accomplishments and impact on society.

NOTABLE QUOTES FROM OUR BLACK HISTORY MAKERS -

I found these quotes on a Black History Month bookmark located in a family Bible. The theme set forth on the bookmark was “**Believe, Achieve and Succeed.**” I thought the quotes should be shared in this forum as they definitely resonate with and speak to us as we focus on what we as a nation and people recently experienced and of which we still have to be mindful. . . . the quotes definitely inspire and motivate us to continue striving to “**Believe, Achieve and Succeed.**”

- “If you are walking down the right path and you’re willing to keep walking, eventually you’ll make progress.” **Barack Obama, 44th U.S. President**
- “Never be limited by other people’s limited imaginations.” **Dr. Mae Jemison, Doctor, Engineer and First Black Woman Astronaut**
- “Every man and woman is born into the world to do something unique and something distinctive, and if he or she does not do it, it will never be done.” **Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, Minister and President of Morehouse College**
- “It is where you are headed and not where you are that will determine where you end up.” **Marian Wright Edelman, Lawyer and Founder/ President of the Children’s Defense Fund**
- “Most people search high and wide for the keys to success. If they only knew, the key to their dreams lies within.” **George Washington Carver, Scientist, Inventor and Educator**
- “Dream the biggest dream for yourself. Hold the highest vision of life for yourself.” **Oprah Winfrey, Entrepreneur, Media Executive and Philanthropist**

BLACK HISTORY AND VALENTINE'S DAY –

We focus our attention on Black History as another manifestation of love . . . love for ourselves and love for others. So, celebrating Black History Month in February, which is also the month in which we celebrate Valentine's Day, makes sense when considered in this context. In that regard, our member, **Amelia Jones**, one of our "millennials," who was a Journalism major at Hampton University and who has shared her written thoughts with us before, has prepared an additional piece for us to enjoy entitled "***Love Aspirations.***" Her reflections encourage us to focus on love for self and to also focus on love for others by listening, helping and trying to make a difference. Her Scripture reference is ***1 Corinthians 13:13: "Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love."*** (New Living Translation) The reflections, which are set forth in a separate attachment, express Amelia's thoughts about how we can all go about experiencing and sharing love. I encourage you to read, reflect and be mindful as we focus on "**the greatest of these is love.**"

UPCOMING EVENTS –

The Black Church - On **February 16th and 17th** (9 p. m. EST, check for local air time), PBS will be premiering a film entitled, "***The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song***, which is a four-hour, two-part series written and hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. According to a press release, the two part series "traces the 400 year-old story of the Black church in America, all the way down to its bedrock role as the site of African American survival and grace, organizing and resilience, thriving and testifying, autonomy and freedom, solidarity and speaking truth to power. The documentary reveals how Black people have worshipped and, through their spiritual journeys, improvised ways to bring their faith traditions from Africa to the New World, while translating them into a form of Christianity that was not only truly their own, but a redemptive force for a nation whose original sin was found in their ancestors' enslavement across the Middle Passage." Wow! This should be a very interesting series, indeed!

Eta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. (Kappa and Gamma Alpha Chapters) – Black History Month Program – Per an email recently received from our beloved member, Natlieth Smith, the Eta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. is inviting us to celebrate Black

History Month with them via Zoom, **Saturday, February 27, 2021, 2PM -4PM PST.** (Meeting ID: 939 423 2104; Passcode: 263567; Dial-in number: 669-900-9128) The theme for their program is ***“Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future.”*** As stated in the email, “[i]f you have participated in any of our many Black History Celebrations . . . you will recall each celebration being an educational, fun-filled day. No matter what they say in the papers and on the news, we know we are a blessed people and we should remind ourselves what it **means ‘To be Young, Gifted and Black.’**” There are several members of our congregation who belong to this noted Sorority, so let us join them in celebrating our Black History.

Pan African “Virtual” Film and Arts Festival - The 29th Annual Pan African Film Festival (PAFF) will take place **February 28 through March 14, 2021**, and will be entirely virtual--a move festival organizers say will increase their audience and bring the African diaspora to film lovers around the world regardless of their physical location or travel budget. Per the PAFF website, Festival co-founder and award-winning actor and activist Danny Glover, will serve as the celebrity ambassador. Detailed information about the schedule and Festival tickets may be obtained by accessing the website at www.paff.org.

In closing, we are mindful of **all that we have accomplished** as a people and **all that we can accomplish in the future**. We are grateful to be in this space and time, as while challenging, we know that with consistent advocacy and a determined will, we can do our part to ensure that this nation continues to move forward and not backward. We stand on the shoulders of many Black historical giants in their respective fields and must continue to fervently chart our course forward. As this month of February has been set aside as Black History Month, I am reminded of a comment by LeBron James in response to a recent question about Black History Month . . . “Black History Month is all twelve months for me. We celebrate Black excellence every single day!” Well said LeBron, well said!!!

Thank you for reading . . . and I hope that you have a **Happy Valentine’s Day**. Let us embrace the reflections set forth by **Amelia Jones** to love one another and allow that emotion to undergird us as we continue our advocacy and work toward **advancing** ourselves and, thus, the ideals of the nation . . . all while being mindful of the significance and import of the name of the esteemed civil rights organization, the National Association for the **Advancement** of Colored People!

LOVE VIBRATIONS

By Amelia Jones



*Can you believe we've
been dealing with
the Covid-19 pandemic
for over a year now?*

It was just over a year ago on January 21, 2020, the first Covid case was reported in the state of Washington. Yet, here we are February 2021, working to have a semblance of normalcy.

In February, we usually look forward to celebrating Black History Month, triumphing in all things Black culture and Black excellence. Also, tucked away in the middle of February, we celebrate Valentine's Day for couples and "Galantine's Day" for the single ladies, a day in which we do something special for those we love.

However, the way January has led off the year, it seems apropos to go about things differently.

This February, let's maximize our efforts to vibrate love. Let's endeavor to give radical love just like Jesus.

How do you vibrate love? Well, it starts with radical self love. Spend quiet moments with yourself, where you calm your breathing and speak affirmations to yourself. If you've already incorporated affirmations into your days, double your attention and give yourself extra love with gracious words. Often, we forget that life is a journey with twists and turns, with growth as a constant benchmark. Acknowledge your strength, as you smile and affirm that you continue to show up and

remain present despite what life brings.

The second step is radical love for others.

Jesus himself was persecuted for interacting with individuals shunned by society. Replicate Jesus' love and choose to work to change our country. Work to change society. Bridge the gaps between generations by listening first and finding common ground to move forward together. Grow strength in your communities when you get involved and attend virtual meetings and by getting to know your neighbors better. Send actual or virtual cards to sick and

shut in near you to spread love.

When I think of love, I think of one of my favorite mixes featuring Whitney Houston. The song is punchy and upbeat and Whitney's voice rings clear. "Think about it, there must be a higher love. Down in the heart or hidden in the stars above. Without it, life is wasted time.

Look inside yours and I'll look inside mine."

Let your love vibrate grandly. Let your love radiate. Give all your love first and then give some more! Reflect on 1 Corinthians 13:13 "three things will last forever, faith, hope and love - and the greatest of these is love."