People in favor of and against a mask mandate for Cobb County schools gather and protest ahead of the school board meeting Thursday, Aug. 19, 2021, in Marietta, Ga. (Ben Gray/Atlanta Journal-Constitution via AP)
During an election year, everything is fair game and every place is a potential battleground. That is clearly evident when the Georgia General Assembly is in session. As an incumbent Republican governor Brian Kemp is facing an unprecedented challenge for his seat from his own party - and a popular Democrat challenger waiting in the wings.

Kemp decided this week to choose Georgia’s classrooms for his latest battleground with the introduction of Senate Bill 514. Having previously said he supported the local school districts to decide mask mandates, however, if Kemp’s bill passes it would allow parents to decide if their child should wear a mask in school through June 23, 2023.

The bill states that school districts couldn’t require face coverings unless parents could opt their children without giving a reason. It also states that no student can be disciplined or get a worse grade if their parent says they don’t have to wear a mask. The measure was introduced by Republican Sen. Clint Dixon of Buford.

“We’ve got to continue to move back to more normal operations,” Kemp said during a news conference. “We trust our parents every day on whether to send their kids to school or not, if they’re not feeling well, if they have a fever. We can certainly do that in terms of masks at this point in the pandemic.”

Naturally, the bill has parents and educators against it and for it. Atlanta Public School system parent Maria Diedrich can’t wait for the bill to pass. “My kids will be unmasked, day one,” Diedrich, who has three children in APS.

“What have we done to our children to put them in this position of silencing them for two years, and a school board, and a superintendent thinks that’s acceptable and it’s not,” Diedrich said in an interview with CBS 46 Atlanta.

She said that districts are hiding behind data that doesn’t accurately portray the current COVID snapshot in schools. Although he supports no classroom masks that didn’t stop his leading GOP opponent Perdue from attacking Kemp.

“Brian Kemp only does the right thing when we spell it out first,” Perdue said Monday in a statement. “Why didn’t Kemp stand up for parents’ rights two years ago when this pandemic began?”

Seth Bringman, a spokesperson for Abrams, likened Kemp’s actions to when he tried to block cities from imposing mask mandates earlier in the pandemic, an attempt that became embroiled in legal ques-
'Out of order': Georgia local redistricting fights intensify

BY JEFF AMY AND SUDHIN THANWALA

ATLANTA (AP)

Georgia Republicans' override of Democrat-
ic local redistricting plans is likely to keep inflaming tensions in the General Assembly this week, as the majority GOP shows no signs of backing down.

Tempers flared Wednesday when a white Republican committee chair-
man cut off the microphone and called Capitol police on a Black Demo-
crat protesting Republican efforts to redraw the Cobb County school board.

In Cobb and two other counties, Republicans are discarding the nor-
mal process whereby lawmakers rubber-stamp county commission and county school board districts proposed locally, as long as districts get approval from a majority of local lawmakers. Instead, bills are being treated as statewide matters with lawmakers overriding the wishes of majority-Democratic local delega-
tions.

The state Senate on Thursday sent a map redrawing Gwinnett County's commission map to Gov. Brian Kemp for his signature or veto, carving out a GOP-leaning district in northern Gwinnett instead of keeping four districts that all elected Democrats in 2020.

In Cobb, Republicans are redrawing districts for both the county school board and county commis-

sion. On the horizon is the same treatment for the commission and school board in the consolidated city-county of Augusta-Richmond.

Republicans also redrew the Athens-Clarke Commission against the wishes of most commissioners in a move that will push three incumbents out of office. That map was treated as local legislation because the local delegation is majority-Re-
publican.

House Speaker David Ralston, a Blue Ridge Republican, defended his party's decision to grab power from local Democrats when asked about disputes in Gwinnett and Cobb.

"There are consequences to elec-
tions," Ralston said Friday, referring to the GOP majorities in the House and Senate. "And there are a lot of people in both of those counties who feel disenfranchised by maps that were prepared locally."

Georgia is unusual in that law-
makers approve county commission and county school board districts. In most states, local governments redraw their own district lines to ad-
just for population changes after U.S. Census results are released every 10 years. Also, for the first time since the 1960s, there's no U.S. Justice De-
partment oversight of Georgia voting changes to prevent racial discrimi-
nation, after the U.S. Supreme Court in 2013 halted the advance approval requirement.

Disputes grew even more intense after House Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Darlene Tay-
lor, a Thomasville Republican, called Capitol Police during a confronta-
tion with House Minority Whip David Wilkerson. It began Wednesday when Wilkerson, a Powder Springs Democrat, said he was "disgusted at this chamber" after Republicans re-
fused to meet with Democrats about a proposed Cobb school board map.

"I would be very, very careful," Taylor said. "You're going to listen to me."

"No, I'm not going to listen to you, because I'm tired of you talking down to me," Wilkerson replied as Taylor ordered Wilkerson's micro-
phone to be turned off and declared him out of order, shortly afterward asking for security to be called.

"This hearing's out of order. ... We have four white members who are fighting three African American members," Wilkerson said of the conflict-riven Cobb school board after his microphone was silenced. Then, as a GOP lawmaker rose from his seat, Wilkerson added, "I dare you to come down here. All we're asking is that we get the same respect you white members get."

Wilkerson was not arrested or es-
corted from the room. The full House has yet to vote on the Cobb maps. Democrats highlighted his treatment in a Friday news conference, arguing Republicans are violating federal law by reducing the power of nonwhite voters.

During a testy exchange Thurs-
day, state Sens. Max Burns and Har-
old Jones disputed the impact of the commission map for Augusta-Rich-
mond County later approved by the Senate. Those measures are now pending in the House.

Burns, a Sylvania Republican, said local officials refused to discuss conc-


cerns about their original map. He also said the new map didn't violate federal law protecting African Amer-
ican voters.

"You have a map that instead of split-
ing 15 precincts, splits two. You have a map that keeps neighbor-
hoods and historic neighborhoods together," Burns said. "You have a map that represents Richmond and Aug-
usta."

Jones, an Augusta Democrat, said the new map affects 17 African Amer-
ican precincts, violates the Voting Rights Act and disrespects mostly Black local officials who approved a different plan.

"At some point in time, we have to start respecting African American elec-
ted officials," Jones said. "This was a total disrespect of it."
Stop the ‘Mis-Education’ of America

The fight against critical race theory is just the latest attempt to historically demean and disempower Black Americans.

February is Black History Month, even though we as Black folks experience our history every day. Yet, Across America, white conservatives — including governors who want to be president — are using the critical race theory controversy as camouflage to promote a false narrative of white history and minimize Black history.

Could it be that with the growing population of people of color in America, this campaign against everything except a white worldview of history is not just a ploy to avoid guilt or shame but a strategy to demean and disempower people of color as they grow in number?

As early as the 1920s, Carter G. Woodson, recognized by many as the “Father of Black History,” stressed the importance of filing the glaring hole in the United States’ educational system. When you read his words, Woodson spoke truth to the oppressor in Africa and America.

In our public school system back then — as is still the case in some school districts across the United States — there was almost no Black history taught.

As I read more quotes from Woodson’s book, I reflected on my own life journey. My dad was a World War II veteran confronted with racism but who cashed in on the benefits from a GI-funded education at Prairie View A&M University. He met my mom in college. They married after graduation and began their life as educators in the Goose Creek School District in Baytown, Texas, just east of Houston.

As the oldest of three children growing up in Baytown, I saw the struggles of my parents in a system that was allegedly equal but was, in reality, fundamentally unjust and unequal. When I got to college at North Texas State University, I joined the student movement in protest of all African American Studies on campus, which led me to join the Black Panther Party, where I headed the Breakfast Program and Liberation School for the Dreamland Project kids. There, I witnessed Black children blossom like flowers absorbing sunlight. I saw that learning Black history builds self-pride and self-esteem, which equates to self-confidence and self-worth.

Granted, we should continue the fight to educate our white colleagues and their children about the true history of this nation, but our top priority should be to educate Black children and build them up. It starts with us — parents, other concerned citizens, and institutions — creating programs to empower our children with our Black history.

Woodson’s words of wisdom reinforce this point: “Philosophers have long conceded, however, that every man has two educators: that which is given to him, and the other that which he gives himself. Of the two kinds, the latter is by far the more desirable. Indeed, all that is most worthy in the man he must work out and conquer for himself. It is that which constitutes our real and best nourishment. What we are merely taught becomes Black history.

It starts with us — parents, other concerned citizens, and institutions — creating programs to empower our children with our Black history.

The present system under the control of the whites trains the Negro to be white and at the same time convinces him of the impropriety or the impossibility of his becoming white…”
We’re supporting small businesses to get them back to thriving

Small businesses are the heart of our communities. At Wells Fargo, we’re working together with more than 3 million small businesses, helping to propel them to a brighter and more secure future.

With our Open For Business Fund, we’re donating roughly $420MM through nonprofits, to provide small businesses in cities across America with valuable equity and resources.

Learn more at wellsfargo.com/impact

©2022 Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. All rights reserved.
America’s School Lunch Program Is Failing Black Students

BY MAYA POTTIGER
Local Media Association

From mushy fish sticks and fries to mystery meat burgers and soggy broccoli, public school lunches in the United States aren’t exactly known as a culinary delight. But these free and reduced-price school lunch meals — as well as a breakfast to start the day — keep millions of low-income students from going hungry. And we’ve known since before the Black Panthers began feeding children in Oakland in 1969 that a disproportionate number of those kids are Black.

So what happens when schools are grappling with the pandemic transition to remote learning, or when individual students are quarantined because they’ve caught COVID-19 — or when their families choose virtual schooling to keep them safe? It turns out that more Black children are going to bed hungry at night.

“What we saw consistently was that families of color, particularly Black families, had food insecurity rates that were two-to-three times as high as white households,” says Elaine Waxman, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute. “That’s not a new story, but again, particularly early in the pandemic, it was really exacerbated for Black families.”

What we saw consistently was that families of color, particularly Black families, had food insecurity rates that were two-to-three times as high as white households, ELAINE WAXMAN, URBAN INSTITUTE SENIOR FELLOW

For low-income families, their child’s school can account for two out of three daily meals on weekdays, or a “significant portion” of a family’s food budget, Waxman says. Research has long shown that school meals help reduce food insecurity, which is further proven during summertime when families struggle from not having access to those meals on a daily basis.

“We knew these things coming into the pandemic,” Waxman says. “But the pandemic has really driven home how critical it is.”

How Schools Tried to Alleviate Food Insecurity

Black families reeling from the effects of the pandemic — such as being more likely to be laid off and less likely to be hired, having fewer resources, and high rates of COVID-19 infection and death — found they needed free and reduced-price meals more than ever. But they couldn’t always count on school meals being an option.

Schools tried to shift their mealtime strategies at the beginning of the pandemic, like implementing a grab-and-go option where families could pick up prepackaged meals. But it didn’t work on a large scale, Waxman says, because it’s not practical to leave if you have kids at home — cash strapped parents or guardians would need to hire a babysitter, for example — and you have to weigh the cost of getting there against the value of the food. Plus, schools were facing staffing shortages.

To get more insight, Word In Black used data tables from the Census Bureau’s Household Pulse surveys, which are conducted monthly over a two-week period to collect data on how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting peoples’ lives.

“Even short spells of food insecurity leave a mark on kids in terms of their health and development,” Waxman says.

Photograph by Katerina Holmes/Pexels

Questions about free meals and food assistance were not included in the surveys until the end of July 2021. Responses to a survey question about how many children did not receive free meals or food assistance provide a sobering perspective on the problem. In July 2021, only 33% of Black children did not need free meals or food assistance. The most recent data from January 2022 revealed that the situation is slightly better, with only 35% not needing help with food.

“When the rug is pulled, it gets pulled out from everyone, and there’s less of a cushion there for families of color,” Waxman says. Urban Institute’s Fall 2020 coronavirus tracking data showed Black families with kids in school were facing food insecurity at rates of nearly 40%. “That was frightening. And it’s frightening because we know from research that even short spells of food insecurity leave a mark on kids in terms of their health and development,” Waxman says.

The Shortcomings of the Pandemic-Electronic Benefits Transfer

Eventually, the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) program emerged. Instead of putting the onus on families and schools to coordinate meal pick-ups, the value of missed meals was electronically put on a card for any kid who was eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

The disproportionate negative financial impact of the pandemic on Black communities can be seen in the data. In both July 2021 and January 2022, more Black families by far had received or used an EBT to help buy groceries, according to the Household Pulse surveys. Black
Who tells the story makes the difference

When the story being told is personal to the storyteller, it makes an emotional connection. And when their story is your story as well, then the connection is even stronger. Just say, “Black Experience,” into your Xfinity Voice Remote and enjoy the largest curated Independent Black Film Collection on demand, plus new and classic TV shows, blockbuster movies, and much more.

Xfinity, where Black History is always on.

Sign up today at xfinity.com/blackexperience

BLACK EXPERIENCE on xfinity

Restrictions apply. Not available in all areas. Requires Xfinity TV with X1 and compatible TV box or Xfinity Flex and Xfinity Internet. ©2022 Comcast. All Rights Reserved. Based on review of curated content between September and December 2021.
COVID

Black Women Urge Business Leaders To Encourage Vaccines

BY GENOA BARROW
OBSERVER Senior Staff Writer

With the pandemic about to enter its third year, COVID-19 is everyone’s “business.”

Motivated to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic among persons of color, Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA) recently brought together African American business leaders and elected officials to discuss the plight of Black businesses during the continued pandemic. The fireside chat was held virtually in partnership with the California African American Chamber of Commerce.

Under the auspices of its “It Takes a Village” theme, the statewide organization has rolled out a Black & Vaxxed campaign to increase COVID-19 vaccinations.

VaShone Huff, co-director of Black & Vaxxed, said the campaign’s focus on ensuring business’ continued health builds on existing connections with the faith community.

“We care about any and every issue that challenges our community’s well being. COVID-19 is such an issue,” said campaign co-director and BWOPA Executive Director LaNiece Jones.

Black & Vaxxed is working in partnership with the hashtag #WEVAXX and the California Department of Health to empower the Black community to make informed decisions about vaccines.

“We know our public health is being politicized and that is not right, but we have to move beyond our fears to protect ourselves and those we love,” Jones said.

The discussion, “It Takes A Village: A Conversation on the Business and Politics of the Pandemic” drew remarks and participation from Timothy Simon, chair of the California African American Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Renee Poole, president-elect of the Association of Black Women Physicians; Christopher Richardson Earl of the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development; Charles Chappie Jones, San Jose’s vice mayor; and state Sen. Sydney Kamlager (D-Los Angeles), vice chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus.

Sen. Kamlager said it’s difficult to imagine, two years after the pandemic’s outbreak, that we still face statewide mask mandates for public indoor venues.

“I don’t know about y’all, but I am tired,” she said. “I am tired of COVID and I am mad at COVID. I am mad at all these folks that walk around and now act like it’s not a thing because it still is.”

While Black people were dying at higher rates than other ethnicities this time last year and had the highest infection rates as of May, Sen. Kamlager said vaccination rates still can vary widely by county. The gulf between the highest rate of several she named (San Francisco, 75%) and the lowest (Alameda, 16%) highlighted her point.

“The hospitalizations and the death rates have hit African Americans the hardest,” she said.

Chronic health conditions such as high cholesterol, diabetes, autoimmune disorders, asthma and obesity all compound the danger the pandemic presents to the Black community and lead to its deadly impact.

Lawmakers of color have been doing their part, Sen. Kamlager said, promoting the importance of social distancing, personal hygiene, face coverings and vaccinations. They promoted and monitored testing, especially in Black communities, and made sure vaccinations got to those communities.

Get the most trusted news and information source for and about Black people in your inbox every week.

“Then pushing back on the administration to make sure that we were also supporting our small businesses and our faith-based communities during the pandemic so that our people would be alive, could be employed and could be around when we were here for the recovery,” Sen. Kamlager said.

The fight continues now, she said, with the Delta and Omicron variants driving numbers up rapidly since Thanksgiving.

“We have a responsibility to double down and to remind folks that this is still very serious,” she continued.

Sacramento Assemblymember Kevin McCarthy noted early vaccine hesitancy on the part of many in the Black community, even in the face of high communal infection and hospitalization rates. He said the causes behind such rates are no mystery.

“It’s lower-income people, people without proper access to health care,” he said. “It’s people who work in the service industry — home care, for example — where they don’t have the luxury of working from home, working through Zoom … these people have to work.”

But McCarthy said unemployment and receiving proper benefits, not vaccine hesitancy, has been the “biggest issue” his constituents, many of whom are state workers, have faced over the last two years.

“Now we see it’s more party affiliation than race in this city,” he said. “We don’t necessarily have a problem with vaccination. We do have a problem with people getting sick and not having proper access to health care. That is the key issue that we’re working on.”

Reign Free, owner of Red Door Catering in Oakland, said her business lost essentially its entire clientele during shelter-in-place and had to lay off 80% of its workforce, which she called “absolutely devastating.” The entrepreneur received local and state Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) grants and another from the Oakland African American Chamber of Commerce. That allowed her to bring some of her team back to work, catch up on the rent and make some technical upgrades, but she said it’s not enough.

“That was then and that helped us keep our doors open,” Free said. “Now, we’re still in the midst of it and we still need to have support around technical support and also funding.”

Sen. Kamlager noted that 40% of Black businesses closed during the first half of the pandemic.

“We know that Black entrepreneurs have sort of blossomed because of this, but we also know that traditional Black businesses and Black employees really had it hard,” she said.

“One of the things the California Legislative Black Caucus did was to hammer through to the administration, to make sure that you’re giving business loans and grants out to our communities. … We passed things like [Senate Bill] 34, which was to encourage insurance companies to procure services from minority-owned businesses; we passed legislation and provided funding for foreclosure and rent relief; and we created the California Rebuilding Fund, which had up to $75 million go to small businesses to help them through the recovery.

It is just as important to talk about Black people and money in the COVID space, she says, as it is to talk about health care access.

“We have a responsibility to monitor both of those trains simultaneously,”

The post Black Women Urge Business Leaders To Encourage Vaccines appeared first on The Sacramento Observer.

Motivated to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic among persons of color, Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA) recently brought together African American business leaders and elected officials to discuss the plight of Black businesses during the continued pandemic.
DeKalb teen featured on Nickelodeon special

Nickelodeon’s ‘Time Kid of the Year’ TV special that showcases extraordinary kids from around the county featured 14-year-old Temple Lester, a freshman at Chamblee High School.

She was anonymously nominated for her STEM Swag Box. A science kit she created to help get more girls and minorities into science. STEM Swag Boxes cost $24.99 on Temple’s website but she also started a crowdfunding campaign that raised $5000 so she could give free boxes to kids in her community. Temple said she first became concerned about inclusion in STEM because when she was 7-years-old she went to science camp and was the only girl in the whole program.

“I got called princess at science summer camp but I was there because I wanted to be a scientist so I learned how to advocate for myself and for others who might be going through the same thing,” Temple told the Atlanta Voice.

Over the past few years Temple said she has put together around one thousand STEM Swag Boxes for kids between 5 and 13 years-old. All of which are put together by the Lester family in their living room. Jennifer Lester, Temple’s mother, told the Voice that she wanted her daughter to find her own interests outside the influence of her parents and family members.

“For Temple, we let her try a lot of different things, so she did dance, she did cheerleading, she did soccer,” said Lester. Adding that all Temple wanted to do on the soccer field was look at the dirt and collect rocks. Lester said she knew how serious Temple was about science when she was able to convince her father to turn part of his basement man cave into a science lab to do experiments. “I follow her lead instead of pushing, and this is what she’s passionate about,” Lester said. In addition to her passion for STEM, Jennifer Lester said her daughters has always been into fashion and style, which she combined to create the STEM Girl Swag movement.

“The reason was to show my friends that science is cool and you don’t have to be a nerd, and wearing glasses and suspenders to love science,” Temple said.

Temple said her path to being a STEM advocate instead of just a scientist began in 5th grade when her teacher encouraged her to sign up for the STEMtalk competition, held every year by the Georgia Science Teachers Association.

“I didn’t want to do it but he convinced my mom to let me do it, and it ended up being the best decision ever,” she said.

Temple’s talk was called ‘I traded in my crown for a lab jacket’ where she talked about her experience being the only girl at science camp. She was one of three winners chosen to speak in front of 2500 science teachers from across the state of Georgia.

Each STEM Swag Box comes with multiple experiments and activities including magnetic slime, LED light paper circuit and an earth science project.

This article is one of a series of articles produced by The Atlanta Voice through support provided by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative to Word In Black, a collaborative of 10 Black-owned media outlets across the country.
BUSINESS

National Geographic podcast searches for the untold stories of slave shipwrecks

BY BRIA SUGGS
The Atlanta Voice

National Geographic has released a new podcast, “Into the Depths”, that is available on all platforms on January 27. The six-part series is hosted by Tara Roberts, who followed a team of Black divers on their journey to document and identify sunken slave ships. Roberts’ background is in print journalism, having worked for magazines such as Ebony, Essence and CosmoGirl. She’s also taught journalism at the university level and worked in non-profit.

Roberts found the team of Black divers randomly when she saw a picture of them in a museum. The divers are a part of Diving with a Purpose (DWP), a 501c3 organization focused on the protection and documentation of slave trade shipwrecks. Roberts reached out to DWP and was invited to dive with them. At the time, she did not have any experience with diving and so she joined a local dive group to begin her training. “I got to know these divers and just decided that they were incredible, and that their story was incredible,” Roberts said. “So, I decided I wanted to help tell their story.” Roberts ended up quitting her job at the time to allow her to put all of her focus into this project. She eventually stumbled upon a notice from National Geographic that they were looking for more explorers and storytellers. She applied and received funding that allowed her to travel the world with the divers.

While working on the podcast, Roberts visited Mozambique, South Africa, Senegal, Benin, Togo, Costa Rica, Florida and Alabama. She interviewed over 100 individuals of all ages, from as young as 16 to as old as 90. “Into the Depths” wasn’t originally a podcast, though. The grant Roberts applied for was to tell the story in blog entries about her travels. Yet after hearing the voices of people in different parts of the world talk about the history of the slave trade, she believed others should too. “I just realized that this story was huge and complex and nuanced,” Roberts said. “Trying to tell it in blog posts just didn’t do it service. So I went back to [National Geographic], and I told them that I was starting to hear this story as a podcast, like I felt like it was an audio story.” Working on “Into the Depths” provided Roberts with an experience that allowed her to learn about a story that often goes untold. Something that stuck with her was realizing the magnitude

See SHIPWRECK on page 11

Viral Movements: How Internet Activism Changed the World

BY NADIA REESE
The Afro

Everyone has interacted with social media in some way. Primarily used to connect people from around the world, recently, the social platforms have taken a political approach. Now, account holders are taking to these websites to spread awareness for issues of social injustice, among other causes.

Popular websites like Facebook and Instagram have been used to capture moments and incidences of racism and police brutality. We now know the names of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Jacob Blake and so many others because of courageous users who uploaded these occurrences on their social media accounts.

The posts gained traction on the web and spread throughout the globe, causing out-breaks of protests against police brutality in cities around the world.

As more people experience the power of the internet through using social media, others are using their platforms to find their voice and advocate for causes that resonate with them.

Viral movements like #BlackLivesMatter, #BlackGirlsVote, #MeToo and #StopKillingUs were created to combat social injustices by encouraging others to speak out.

#BlackLivesMatter

The Black Lives Matter movement was formed in 2013 shortly after 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was killed by security guard George Zimmerman in Florida, an incident that sent the Black community into an outrage. The organization was founded by Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza and Opal Tometti, with a mission to eliminate discrimination and violence inflicted by law enforcement and White supremacists against the Black community. On June 2, 2020, the hashtag #Blacklivesmatter reached even more accounts when users of all races and ethnicities posted blacked-out photos on Instagram as a response to the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. Under each post there were captions that said #BlackOutTuesday instead of #BlackLivesMatter. In May, George Floyd died after he was put in a chokehold by a police officer, and Breonna Taylor died after being shot multiple times by law enforcement as they raided her boyfriend’s home. Throughout the Black Lives Matter movement, social media stars, such as TikTok influencer Erynn Chambers and author and activist Roxane Gay, helped others understand what was happening by posting about police brutality, Black history and ways to support the movement. Gay posted information about Juneteenth, a newly designated federal holiday that observes the emancipation of slaves, while Chambers used humor to speak out to have conversations on TikTok about the Black community. Since then, the Black Lives Matter movement has converted into a global network with chapters in 18 cities across the United States, and abroad in the United Kingdom and Canada.

#MeToo

The #MeToo movement was founded by Black activist Tarana Burke in 2006. Burke, who was also a survivor of sexual violence, created this movement to help young people, the LGBTQ+ community and all people of color who are survivors of sexual and domestic violence. The #MeToo movement went viral after actress Alyssa Milano accused producer Harvey Weinstein of sexual assault. Later, many other actresses stepped forward against Weinstein, such as model Cara Delevingne and actress Salma Hayek. Through protesting, connecting individuals, partnering with organizations and providing resources for healing, the #MeToo movement has made a global impact in eight other countries. MeToo also partnered with an organization known as the Global Fund for Women to effectively provide properly-equipped resources to help eliminate sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) around the world.

#BlackGirlsVote

The Baltimore-based organization Black Girls Vote was founded on Nov. 30, 2015 by Nykidra “Nyki” Robinson. The organization was founded on that day specifically to honor the life and work of Shirley Chisholm, a woman who inspired Robinson. Black Girls Vote supports Black women from all political parties to help them voice their concerns, opinions and
**LUNCH**

Continued from page 6

families (31%) used EBT cards 182% more than white families (11%) and 287% more than Asian families (8%) in July 2021. The gap closed a bit by January 2022, with Black families (26%) using EBT cards 189% more than Asian and white families (9% each).

However, P-EBT isn’t available to everyone who needs it. The first problem, as the Washington Post reported earlier this month, is that most states haven’t applied to renew the program for the 2021-2022 school year. Currently, only eight states are approved for federal aid, and another 17 are in various stages of the application process. But even if more states were participating, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which runs the National School Lunch Program and P-EBT, has made it so that students who are enrolled in virtual schooling are no longer eligible for free meals. The reasoning is that virtual schools are not equipped with cafeterias or culinary staff, so they would not provide students with meals even in a non-pandemic situation, and there’s nothing “to reimburse families for anyway,” according to The Counter’s in-depth feature on P-EBT.

As Food and Nutrition Service Administrator Cindy Long wrote in a statement to Word In Black: “FNS is committed to ensuring that school meals continue to be a reliable source of nutrition for children throughout the school day. We are actively working to leverage flexibilities that have been provided by Congress, recognizing the importance of school meals in protecting our children during this pandemic.”

Urban Institute’s Waxman pointed out that families that enrolled in virtual academies — separate schools that are entirely virtual — chose that option because they were among the most vulnerable. “I got an email today from a grandparent in a state where that’s what they’ve done because both she and her husband are immunocompromised. They’ve kept the kid home for virtual schooling this year,” Waxman says. “She didn’t realize that that meant there were going to be no benefits. It’s a big problem.”

That reality could be affecting more and more Black families. Though the trend began prior to the pandemic, we’ve also seen a rising number of Black families switch to homeschooling since 2020. Not only do families want to keep their kids safe health-wise, but they’re also fed up with not seeing themselves or their history represented in school textbooks.

**SHIPWRECK**

Continued from page 10

of human lives lost during the slave trade. “There are probably about 3000 ships that wrecked during the Middle Passage,” Roberts said. “So far, less than 10 of those wrecks have been found. But these are the ships that brought over close to 12.5 million Africans ... They estimate that 1.8 million Africans lost their lives in the Middle Passage.”

Roberts also took the time to learn about the communities connected to some of the shipwrecks by working with archeologists and historians. One of the topics covered in the podcast is who was involved in the slave trade. Roberts learned through this journey that it was not just the enslavers and the enslaved on the Middle Passage ships. “Many of these ships were insured, because financial backers had raised money or put their own money into it, and they wanted their money back,” Roberts said. “So if a ship didn’t make it, they would file an insurance claim and get paid. So you’ve got insurance companies who are involved in this, you have construction companies, wood building companies, it’s all of these other actors that are a part of the slave trade and it made money off of it. And some of that wealth that was created still exists today.” While on this quest to expand the historical record and honor those who died, Roberts discovered the maritime underground railroad, which she has a personal connection to. The maritime underground railroad was a network that helped those who were enslaved to freedom on boats.

Roberts’ hometown, Edenton, North Carolina was one of the stops. This inspired her to take a deeper look into her own familial history. Her great grandfather, Jack, was born into slavery in 1837. With the help of a genealogist, Roberts was able to learn that Jack owned over 150 acres of land and that he fought in the Civil War. “I didn’t know that there was something to feel pride around with my ancestor, until I started to look back ... And I started to see him,” Roberts said. “And I think that that is available for other African Americans, that maybe they might also be inspired to look back into their own families.” Roberts hopes that “Into the Depth” is a thought provoking listen that sparks conversation. “I hope that this podcast maybe sparks something inside of [people], and gives them the courage to look back and uplift those who came before us and to honor them, and to find something to wrap their arms around and to feel pride around,” Roberts said.
BY CHARLENE CROWELL
Center for Responsible Lending (CRL)

Regardless of locale, profession, or income, every family needs and deserves a home. But for many — especially Black Americans and other people of color — finding and maintaining affordable housing is increasingly difficult. New research documents not only escalating rental costs, but how Black American efforts to buy affordable homes are blocked by high denial rates nearly double that of white consumers.

While it is encouraging that this new research documents real-life barriers and localities to access the American Dream of homeownership, mortgage lenders must clearly account for their reasons to deny Black Americans owning their own piece of America. The longstanding racial homeownership gap is today only 43% for Black households - 30% less that of white households at 3%. Further, as long as Blacks are forced to struggle with rising rental costs, these same families are denied the housing cost containment of a fixed-rate mortgage, as well as family stability, and the wealth-building that accrues to homeowners.

Despite unprecedented federal housing assistance during the pandemic, a report by Harvard’s Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS) finds stark racial and income divides in its analysis of the nation’s rental market. Nearly a quarter of Black renters were behind on rent in the third quarter of 2021, as well as 19% of Hispanic renters. By contrast, the share of white renters in arrears was half that: 9%.

"This disparity reflects long-term discrimination in labor markets that has consigned many households of color to low-wage jobs in the service industry," says Chris Herbert, Managing Director of the Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS). "And this sector suffered the most drastic employment cuts over the past two years, which has only compounded existing inequalities."

The term, 'rental affordability' is a ratio of monthly housing costs as a percentage of household income. Researchers, lawmakers and other housing stakeholder groups, consider affordable rent to cost no more than 30%. For homeowners, this ratio must also take factors other than the mortgage payment into consideration. Property taxes, homeowner’s insurance and the required private mortgage insurance for small down payment home purchases, must also be included in the calculation.

But with low rental vacancy rates in most metro areas, rental increases are widespread, and 'affordable' rentals are in short supply. The number of units renting for less than $600 fell by 3.9 million between 2011 and 2019, the JCHS report found. Additionally, 176 million rentals—40 percent of the nation's supply—are located in areas with at least moderate risk of Blacks and other people of color. Nearly a quarter of Black households of color live in areas with at least moderate risk of discrimination.

In general, according to ATTOM, homeownership is the most affordable in the Midwest and in the South. Moreover, many of these areas are already home to large numbers of Blacks and other people of color. The most affordable homeownership among counties with a population of at least 1 million are Allegheny County (Pittsburgh), PA; Bexar County (San Antonio), TX; Cuyahoga County (Cleveland), OH; Harris County (Houston), TX; Hillsborough County (Tampa); Philadelphia County, PA and Wayne County (Detroit), MI.

Homeownership is also a viable option in smaller locales with populations of 50,000 or less including: Lake County (Gary), IN; Seminole County; FL (outside Orlando); Knox County (Knoxville), TN; East Baton Rouge Parish (Baton Rouge), LA, and Jefferson Parish, LA (outside New Orleans).

But as long as mortgage application denial rates disproportionately impact Blacks, Black homeownership will continue to lag behind the rest of the nation. Now, while interest rates remain low, Blacks are being locked out of cost-savings enjoyed by others and the resulting wealth growth.

The Urban Institute’s new analysis of the annual Home Mortgage Disclosure Act compares the race and ethnicity of those denied mortgages in 2020 for purchase loans as well as home improvement and refinance loans. In each of these loan types, the largest gaps in denial occurred between Blacks and whites. In home improvement loans, 63% of Blacks were denied compared to only 39% for whites. Similarly, nearly a quarter – 24.5% of Blacks were denied home purchase loans, while the corresponding number for whites was 13.4%.

Instead of being locked out, it is time to bring the benefits of home equity and wealth-building to more families. Black America must have its fair share of the American Dream.
ENTERTAINMENT

Hip-Hop and Los Angeles were front and center during Super Bowl LVI halftime show

BY DAWN MONTGOMERY
The Atlanta Voice

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Last year, I wrote that the Super Bowl in Raymond James stadium was probably one of the Blackest Super Bowl telecasts in NFL history. After the summer of 2020 and the racial injustices we endured during the start of the pandemic, the NFL produced a show that would draw its Black sports fans back into the league.

This year’s Super Bowl halftime show was for Inglewood, Los Angeles and hip hop fans everywhere. This halftime show was one of the best performances I’ve seen since Bruno Mars and Beyoncé’s set in 2016. It’s not up to me to determine which one was the best of the two, but we all can agree that this was amazing to see.

We saw the commercials before the Super Bowl directed by F. Gary Gray and the production of it drew fans in immediately. There were articles that questioned how this show would turn out and would it meet Hip-Hop fans’ expectations.

There were a lot of fans online questioning how the league could ask the headliners to only select one song from their stacked catalogs. As the show started, the tweets ramped up and fans shared how much they loved what they were watching. From inside of SoFi Stadium you could hear the screams and you could also see fans who didn’t know what was going on, but loved the vibe.

The halftime show headliners were Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Mary J. Blige, Eminem and Kendrick Lamar with 50 cent as a special guest. Most fans watching the show missed the music video reference of 50 cent hanging from his set because they might not have been born yet or they just didn’t remember it. Mary J. Blige served a stylish look with her beautiful blonde hair, thigh high boots and flawless vocals. Kendrick Lamar reminded us “We Gone Be Alright” while Eminem allegedly defied the NFL’s wishes by taking a knee after his performance.

It warmed my heart to see Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg back on stage together, but I’ll never forget how Dr. Dre has beaten women throughout his professional and personal life. As fans, we can enjoy the music while knowing that these artists are humanly flawed performing over a perfect beat.

With Republicans stating how they’re losing interest in the NFL and how some of them oppose the Rooney rule, you can tell they weren’t the targeted audience for this halftime show. However, their children might’ve enjoyed the show because they’ve danced to these songs on TikTok or at least their friends have. This show was for a millennial like myself who is proud of her Blackness and the sound of our music.

Black creatives were behind the scenes pulling off a phenomenal pre-game and halftime show at SoFi stadium. The production team includes Roc Nation’s Executive Vice President Jana Fleshman, Executive Producer Jesse Collins, Executive Producer Desiree Perez, Co-Executive Producer Dionne Harmon, Music Director Adam Blackstone, Wardrobe Designer Lila Nikole, Pre-game Producer Jeanne Rouzan-Clay and Production Designer Bruce Rodgers. Fatima Robinson choreographed the entire halftime show and she’s one of the most sought-after choreographers in the world. Pepsi and Roc Nation gave us the perfect musical experience in 15 to 20 minutes.

This experience felt like a final stop of the Last Episode tour that featured Dr. Dre & Friends, but we got to watch it for free. Well some of us did. Inglewood was the perfect host for this reunion, party and every fan mattered. Hip-Hop has helped so many of us deal with our everyday struggles that we face here in America. Hip-Hop has given a voice to communities that are silenced for crying out for help. For about fifteen minutes, I forgot how much more work the National Football League and America has to do for minorities.

Last year’s production and this year’s halftime show might inspire change, but how quickly will that happen? We shall see.
NOW HIRING!
CUSTOMER SERVICE
February 18 - 24, 2022
www.theatlantavoice.com

Deputy Registrar of Titles
Registered proprietor(s): Coseta Francis, Gysai G.
Country: Jamaica W.I.
Volume: 9
Lot: 91
Folio: 5
has/have declared that the following duplicate Certificate
REGISTRATION OF TITLES ACT (RTA)
NOTICE PURSUANT TO SECTION 82 OF THE
OFFICE OF TITLES
Lot:
Folio:

Verenest Technologies, Inc. has job openings for Sr. Software Developer L. Jobs located in Atlanta, GA and various unanticipated locations throughout the U.S. Design, develop, implement, test, and deploy software applications. Research, analyze, and determine information needs and dataflow requirements. Gather and evaluate user requirements and procedures. Travel/relocate to various unanticipated locations throughout the U.S. for long and short term assignments at client sites. Requires Master’s degree or foreign equivalent in Computer Science, Engineering (any), or related. Mail resume with cover letter to Verenest Technologies, Inc., 2310 Parklake Drive, Suite 145, Atlanta, GA 30345; Job 21VNT07; EOE

Mngr 1, Enterprise Data & Analytics – Comcast Cable Comm, LLC, Atlanta, GA. Mng Analysts w/ team resp for create & deliver stratagy, analytical prdc, recommend & actionable insight for biz leaders. Trvl 5% domestic; Req: Bach in Stats, Data Sci, Applied Math or rtd quant ftld, & 5 yrs exp (or Master’s in these fields & 3 yrs exp) prfrm data analysis; two (2) yrs incl devlp random forest & decision tree stat models use SAS, R or Python; create math & stats functns (shift drivers, hypotheses tests, behavrl analyses, or operatnl analyses); use SQL to code relatnl DBs; create machn learn algorithms; & dvlp data visualization use Tableau, PowerPoint, ThinkCell & Excel. Apply to: Denise_Mapes@cable.comcast.com Ref Job ID # 6570

FULTON COUNTY ADVERTISEMENT FOR BID
Sealed bids for 22TBC009A-CJC - Material Aid and Incontinence Products for the Fulton County Senior Services Department, will be accepted by the Fulton County Department of Purchasing & Contract Compliance electronically through BidNet Direct at https://www.bidnetdirect.com/georgia/fultoncounty on Friday, February 18, 2022. All bids submitted must be received no later than 1:00 p.m. (local Eastern) time on the stated date. Bids will be publicly read at 1:00 a.m., local time, on the stated due date via zoom.

The draft Plan is available for public review through atlantahousing.org. Comments can be made at the Public Hearing or submitted via 24/7 message line (404) 817-7458, email to strategy@atlantahousing.org, or by mail to AH 230 John Wesley Dobbs Ave NE, Atlanta GA, 30303. All comments must be received no later than 03/11/2022. AH residents, program participants and other interested parties are invited to attend the Public Hearing. For assistance or reasonable accommodation to review the draft Plan or attend the Hearing, please call the message line by 02/17/2022. AH abides by all Fair Housing laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, familial status or disability. Please visit atlantahousing.org/notices for Public Hearing zoom information.

The Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta, Georgia (AH) will hold a public hearing to present its FY 2023 MTW Annual Plan, which outlines our vision to become the frontrunner of innovative, affordable housing options for working families, seniors and disabled residents in the city of Atlanta. The draft Plan is available for public review through atlantahousing.org. Comments can be made at the Public Hearing or submitted via 24/7 message line (404) 817-7458, email to strategy@atlantahousing.org, or by mail to AH 230 John Wesley Dobbs Ave NE, Atlanta GA, 30303. All comments must be received no later than 03/11/2022. AH residents, program participants and other interested parties are invited to attend the Public Hearing. For assistance or reasonable accommodation to review the draft Plan or attend the Hearing, please call the message line by 02/17/2022. AH abides by all Fair Housing laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, familial status or disability. Please visit atlantahousing.org/notices for Public Hearing zoom information.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
Tuesday, March 1, 2022, 6 pm – 8 pm
Via Zoom Teleconferencing Platform

NOTICE
February 18 - 24, 2022
www.theatlantavoice.com
I have to admit to you that growing up as a child, I was nowhere near being a student of the bible, even though I was surrounded by what I now know were the best kind of Christians. They were the love-filled family kind. Now with just a little bit of biblical insight and a smidgen of the Holy Spirit, I can honestly say I can see the simplicity of the truth in the scriptures I now study.

I find myself gravitating to ministers, bishops, evangelists and pastors who have dissected in sermon the power of the tongue; yes, that small but dangerously lethal missile contained in your mouth. I know I’ve written about this before but I’m compelled by my own struggle to acknowledge how difficult and important it is to try and control that which is often times uncontrollable. Without a biblical perspective, history alone confirms the ability of deceitful articulate oratory to entice weak men to murder, married men to stray, prideful men to war and peace-loving folk to accept the slaughter of those who don’t believe what others deem the “real”.

On a daily basis, an untethered tongue can forever sear the spirit of an innocent child, a wanting spouse, a true friend or even a caring coworker. It is sometimes quite refreshing to contemplate how powerful and wonderful a well-intentioned thank you, a sincere I’m sorry or a genuine I believe in you can be. I’m convinced chaos and hurt feelings are often a direct result of the devil infiltrating our mouths.

James 3:10 tells us that the tongue contains the power of both life and death. Having been the scarred victim of ill-intended vocalized criticism and having verbally killed the spirit of many people I hold dear; I know first-hand that James was right.

I have been trying to correct this human flaw by consciously being outspoken in my remarks to others; verbally uplifting if you will. I’d like to think of myself as a possible vessel of the living God before I speak by simply recognizing that man was made in God’s image and any man is tantamount to cursing God.

Now that’s a mouth full. But as we all know; it is very difficult to put God in your thoughts before the words come out of your mouth. Could it be that James 1:26 is one of the keys to understanding this? “If you think you are being religious but can’t control your tongue, you are fooling yourself and everything you do is useless.”

Compare the words of Christ to any former or current demagogue and I assure you that Jesus’ words of love will simply and eloquently repulse gossip, rumor and innuendo, narcissism and maybe even ignorance in some cases. They (Jesus’ words) provide a mechanism by which we should listen to what is being said to us by others, particularly those who are closest to us.

It is impossible to love God without loving Jesus as the Word of God. Just by saying so confirms the truth and the spoken truth will set you free. If not, God centered words can be misinterpreted and like misguided missiles, hit the wrong target. That’s the intent of Satan. Can you spell Babylon?

Proverbs 12:14 says, “Reckless words pierce like a sword but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” Proverbs 12:22, “The Lord detests lying lips but He delights in ones who are truthful.”

Think before you speak. Speak from the heart and not the mind. Proverbs 13:3, “He who guards his lips guides his life. But he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.”

How many times have you been misunderstood in the last few days? At home? At work? In church? On Zoom? How often have you started out trying to help somebody and ended up making that person feel put upon because you used the wrong words? Or, the words you used to uplift were received as major downers? So, I beg you not to misunderstand me what I’m saying right now. May God bless you and your tongue.

May He bless and keep you always.
Generating Moments to Momentum
Black History Month 2022

Momentum is measured in moments, and Georgia Power is proud to celebrate the momentous achievements of those who work tirelessly to advance equity for all people. Visit us on the web as well as our social channels this month to explore stories of Georgians who are working tirelessly to create forward motion in their communities. And join us on Facebook Live on February 23 at 6 p.m. for an in-depth conversation with community leaders about how we can work to create equity in ours. Learn more at georgiapower.com/BHM