

# The Triangle TRIBUNE

THE TRIANGLE'S CHOICE FOR THE BLACK VOICE

"Celebrating Our 23rd Year"

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Former Southern High player Josh Hall featured in new sports documentary.



## NC HBCUs part of Google's \$15M commitment

By Bonitta Best

editor@triangletribune.com

North Carolina Central and Saint Augustine's universities are among 16 new HBCUs to join Google's Grow with Google HBCU Career Readiness Program expansion.

The program provides digital skills workshops to help African American students prepare for the workforce. The Thurgood Marshall College Fund will assist in the program after receiving a \$1 million investment. The goal is to reach 20,000 students this school year.

The additional 16 institutions bring the number of HBCUs in the program to 20, with a goal to make it available to all HBCUs by the fall.

"A central part of the mission of the TCMF is to prepare the next generation of workforce talent. Our partnership with Google enables this mission and ensures students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities are positioned to compete for meaningful careers," said president and CEO Harry L. Williams.

Please see GOOGLE/2A

## Wake students to return to class

By Bryan Anderson  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper on Tuesday announced his desire for the state's more than 1.5 million public school students to be given the option of daily in-person classes. But he declined to compel districts to make that option available. "Let's give these local boards a chance," Cooper said. "They've had to make some very tough decisions on the ground. I think we agree our decisions are best made about education at a local level."

But many children and parents remain stuck in online-only offerings. The state's largest two districts in Wake and Mecklenburg counties presently have all students learning remotely. A database of all 115 districts' reopening maintained by the N.C. School Boards Association shows many other areas staying fully online.

Cooper now finds himself in the unique position of being at odds with both Republican leaders and the state's largest lobbying group for teachers. The North Carolina Association of Educators wants more reopening money and safety protections for teachers, while Republicans are calling for a statewide requirement to swiftly reopen K-12 schools.

The newly reelected governor said he has issues with a plan from state lawmakers that would force districts to offer at least partial in-person instruction to all of its students, though parents must be given the choice to keep their kids at home. "I don't think that's the way to go," Cooper said. "I think the way to go is to get our local boards to take this action, and I believe that most of them will do and hopefully all of them will do so because it's the right thing to do."

Cooper said he worries Senate Bill 37 would compromise safety guidelines and added local school boards need flexibility to make decisions on their own. The governor also cited local control as a reason for his decision not to issue an executive order.

In September, Cooper encouraged districts to reopen K-5 classes for in-person instruction. He did not extend that recommendation to middle schools and high schools. Updated guidance from his administration on Tuesday reiterates prioritization for younger students by allowing elementary school kids to go back in person without having to maintain 6 feet of physical distance.

Please see CLASS/2A

## Durham Public Schools Winter Graduation '21



Durham Public Schools 2021 winter graduates are all smiles after their graduation ceremony last week at various high schools. Congratulations graduates!

## Black Dems fight back on classes

By Greg Childress  
THE POLICY WATCH

Black Democrats are pushing back against Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson's claim that systemic racism doesn't exist.

Robinson, the state's first Black lieutenant governor, is a Republican from Guilford County.



Robinson

He made the comment last week during a State Board of Education debate over revisions to social studies standards that would ensure the viewpoints of marginalized groups such as Blacks, Native Americans and others are included in history lessons.

Racism is a thing of the past, Robinson argued this week, citing the election of Barack Obama to president in 2008, then again in 2012, and his own election in November. "The system of government that we have in this nation is not systemically racist," Robinson said. "In fact, it is not racist at all."

State Sen. Gladys Robinson, a Democrat from Guilford County, strongly disagreed in a statement the N.C. Democratic Party released. "Systemic racism is very real," Robinson said. "As a PTA parent, I fought against unequal punishment of black boys for the same offense as white boys, yet leaders refused to recognize their racial and cultural biases."

As a member of the UNC Board of Governors, Gladys Robinson said she fought to make sure historically Black colleges and universities received the funding and accreditation they deserved.

"There still remains major disparities between our HBCUs and their white counterparts," she said. "But these are just some of the many inequities that exist today. Attempting to erase our country's fraught past will do nothing to move us toward a more equal and just world. It's past time for us to teach and speak the truth; our children will be better citizens and absolutely better leaders."

State Rep. Rosa Gill, a Wake County Democrat, called Mark Robinson's remarks absurd. "We cannot shelter our students from the ugly reality that racism has torn this country apart," Gill said. "In order to make progress, we must educate and address these inequities openly and directly."

Bobbie Richardson, a veteran educator and first vice chair of the N.C. Democratic Party, expressed alarm at Mark Robinson's "deeply insensitive comments."

"His sentiments fly in the

Please see BLACK/3A



North Carolina Central enrollment has held steady during the pandemic.

## Despite pandemic, NCCU continues to be 'healthy'

By Freda Freeman  
CORRESPONDENT

DURHAM - Checking its pulse, Chancellor Johnson Akinleye gave an update on the health of North Carolina Central University during his annual media briefing last week. Despite the pandemic, Akinleye said NCCU is faring well.

Since March, the university has been operating with a mix of online and onsite classes. Akinleye said last semester the campus maintained a 2.1% COVID-19 positivity rate, which is below the local and national rate. Students and faculty are being compliant with the university's safety guidelines and restrictions.

Akinleye said he is often asked the "famous" question: How is the pandemic impacting NCCU? "Obviously, our operations have been impacted

in some ways, there's no question about it, as well as our revenue, there's no question about that; that is all across the nation, not just NCCU," he said.

However, Akinleye said NCCU continues to focus on its No. 1 business: academics. "We are still in the business of educating our students, we're doing that; we're doing it very well," he said.

*Some of the highlights:*

\* Enrollment remains steady at 8,078 students.

\* Almost 1,700 academic degrees were awarded in May and December 2020.

\* Students performed 181,965 community service hours last year, the equivalent of \$4.6 million in economic impact.

\* NCCU remains a top degree-granting university for Black students, as ranked by

Diverse: Issues in Higher Education magazine

Over the past two years, NCCU has expanded to offer a bachelor's degree in biomedical science and sports medicine, and a master's degree in higher education and assistive technology in visual impairment. Among planned degree programs currently awaiting state approval are entertainment studies; nutrition and dietetics; fashion and apparel; and animation and interactive media studies.

"Even though we're operating in this environment, the work of moving our institution forward continues, and we're proud that we've really expanded our academic portfolio in these areas," Akinleye said.

Akinleye added that NCCU continues to be a leader in grant-sponsored research. For

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## Despite pandemic, NCCU in good financial standing

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fiscal year 2021, as of Jan. 18, the school has received \$21 million in grants. It received \$34.8 million in 2020. Those grants include \$2.7 million received from the National Institute of Health to study a type of esophageal cancer that disproportionately affects Black people, and \$1.8 million to address health disparity issues among American Indians.

NCCU also is involved in a new program, the Advanced Center for COVID-19 Related Disparities, which studies the public health and economic impact of the pandemic on

underserved populations throughout the state. Deepak Kumar, who leads the ACCORD program, said researchers have collected data in 14 counties, conducted 1,500 surveys, and administered more than 3,500 COVID tests. The next step is to provide counties with freezers to properly store the COVID vaccine.

Akinleye said philanthropic support for NCCU remains strong. Although its traditional homecoming was canceled last year, alumni raised \$2 million during a virtual homecoming. Also, NCCU received a \$1 million gift from TikTok to

support its health care program.

The campus continues to expand with new buildings, including student housing and fast food services, creating a "living and learning space that is second to none," Akinleye said.

Two new student residence halls opened last semester and a third is slated for completion in August. A new student center is projected to be completed this year. NCCU will break ground on a new School of Business in March. Also plans are in the works for a 24/7 collaborative learning and research center.



Saint Augustine's University

COURTESY

## NC HBCUs part of Google \$15M program

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The readiness program provides HBCU career centers with funding along with in-person and online digital skills training like design thinking, project management and brand building.

The \$1 million to the TCMF is part of Google's \$15 million investment to

upskill Black workers.

"This initiative will assist our students at North Carolina Central to enhance their digital skills, which will make them viable and employable citizens when they graduate," said NCCU Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Angela Coleman.

"In addition, we also look forward to all the re-

sources that our alumni and faculty will also have access to. This partnership will truly benefit the entire NCCU community."

For more information on the Grow with Google's HBCU Career Readiness program, visit [www.tcmf.org](http://www.tcmf.org).

## Applicant errors, not fraud, main source of benefit overpayments

By Joe Killian

THE POLICY WATCH

An unprecedented surge in applications for unemployment benefits overwhelmed the state Division of Employment Security, Assistant Secretary Pryor Gibson told state lawmakers last week. And nearly a year into the pandemic, it is still struggling.

More than 1.4 million North Carolinians have applied for unemployment benefits since last March, when the COVID-19 pandemic first shut down large segments of the economy and led to record layoffs. "Our offices continue to get calls that we can't often get answers for in dealing with [DES]," said Sen. Chuck Edwards, R-Henderson, co-chair of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Unemployment Insurance. "North Carolina citizens deserve an employment system that works for them."

Although the division has paid out more than \$8 billion in state and federal funds, claimants continue to face long waits for approval, rejection of their applications because of errors, accidental overpayments and fraud. Errors and fraud account for about \$70 million in overpayments, money the state is now working to recover. Many people who didn't know they were overpaid now have found their benefits cut in half as they continue to struggle to make ends meet.

The problems at DES have many sources, Gibson said. Inadequate staffing. Large numbers of claimants navigating the system for the first time, with too few people to guide them. An uptick in fraud during the pandemic chaos - particularly in federal programs. Poor planning and administration at the federal level has also made things more difficult.

Gibson turned to a football metaphor to describe

the last 11 months. "Our team is down in there blocking and tackling with the best of them," he said. "They're doing a great job in some very trying conditions. But every time something changes at the federal level, the goal posts move. And we have to kind of stop what we're doing down this path and look up, make sure we're headed toward the right goal post."

Asked whether DES is looking to states that are doing better, Gibson said no. States share information nearly every day, he said, and DES knows where it needs to improve. But it's difficult to compare North Carolina to states like South Carolina or Idaho, Gibson said, where the size of the state or the staffing levels in their divisions are vastly different.

State Sen. Paul Newton, R-Cabarrus, pressed for improvement, saying the division needs to bring its metrics more in line with the states that are better handling the situation. "We have excuses all day long," Newton said. "We're different. We're bigger. We've got more people."

The division has more funding than that of smaller states, Newton said. They should be able to keep up and do more. "You've got a tough job, we appreciate that," Newton said. But this far into the pandemic, he said, the division needs to be improving and not just "fighting fires as they pop up."

Much of the information Gibson shared was discouraging. Of the nearly \$70 million in overpayments in North Carolina, fraud accounts for about \$9 million, mostly attributable to federal programs, which, Gibson said, "are fraught with fraud."

The federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation Program, which provided an additional \$600 per week to the un-

employed, reported nearly \$45 million in overpayments in North Carolina. But most of the overpayments occurred because of applicant error, Gibson said. People have been trying to navigate the system without assistance — a situation the division is addressing with additional staffing.

State lawmakers can waive the recovery of non-fraud overpayments made under federal programs, from which the majority of assistance to North Carolinians has come. Several committee members supported waiving those repayments. "When people are already struggling and have been waiting so long, I think it weighs on all of our hearts," said State Sen. Jim Perry, R-Harnett. "Through no fault of theirs they received the check or the funds deposited, and they fed the baby or paid the electric bill, and now there's another round of despair."

DES has made a series of improvements that should help streamline the process as the pandemic stretches into 2021, Gibson said. Its staff had 500 employees before the pandemic and has now grown to more than 2,500, including temporary and contracted employees, interns and some retired employees who have returned in the current "all hands on deck" situation.

It also opened a new call center and added up to 1,800 agents to handle incoming calls about claims. "We see the light in the tunnel," Gibson said. "And we're pretty sure it's not a train."

Customer call center:  
1-888-737-0259 (This is for claimants only.)

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance line: 866-847-7209

Website:  
<https://des.nc.gov/>

## What to know before deducting a home office

By Robin Hartill, CFP

THE PENNY HOARDER

If you're one of the millions of workers whose home is now doubling as office space due to COVID-19, you may be wondering whether that means a sweet deduction at tax time. Hold up, though: The IRS has strict rules about taking the home office deduction, and they changed drastically under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which passed in late 2017.

\* If you're employed by a company and you work from home due to COVID, you can't deduct home office space from your taxes. This applies whether you're a permanent remote worker or if your office is temporarily closed because of the pandemic. The rule of thumb is that if

you're a W-2 employee, you're not eligible.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act suspended the deduction for miscellaneous unreimbursed employee business expenses, which allowed you to claim a home office if you worked from home for the convenience of your employer, provided that you itemized your tax deductions. The law nearly doubled the standard deduction. As a result, many people who once saved money by itemizing now have a lower tax bill when they take the standard deduction.

\* If you're self-employed — whether you own a business or you're a freelancer, gig worker or independent contractor — you probably can take the deduction, even if you're also a full-time employee of a com-

pany you don't own. It doesn't matter if you work from home at that full-time job or work from an office, as long as you meet the other criteria that we'll discuss shortly.

You're only allowed to deduct the gross income you earn from self-employment, though. That means if you earned \$1,000 from your side hustle plus a \$50,000 salary from your regular job that you do remotely, \$1,000 is the most you can deduct.

\* The IRS requires that you have a space that you use "exclusively and regularly" for business purposes. If you have an extra bedroom and you use it solely as your office space, you're allowed to deduct the space — and that space

Please see OFFICE/3A

## Governor wants all districts to return pupils to classrooms

Continued from page 1A

ing. The bill introduced by three Republican lawmakers and supported by GOP leadership cleared its first committee vote on Tuesday.

"These poor little kids, sitting in front of these screens, it's just criminal what we're doing to them," said GOP Senate Majority Whip Tom McInnis during the education hearing. "We need to put them back in the classroom. We need to give the option which you've given here. This is great legislation."

The plan calls for all K-12 students to return to in-person instruction within a couple weeks of it becoming law. Cooper hinted at his opposition to the bill as is, but did not say whether he would veto it if it reached his desk.

"We'll continue talking to the legislature," Cooper said. "I have concerns with this legislation that's going through right now and hope today spurs actions by local school boards, and I think that that will happen."

Standing alongside Cooper at Tuesday's news conference was Republican Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt. She cited studies showing less severe health risks of bringing kids back to school compared to transmission in the general community.

"We have received extensive data to confirm that the health risks of in-person attendance are thankfully much lower than we initially feared," Truitt said.

Meanwhile, teacher advocates are upset Cooper and

public health officials have not placed teachers higher up in the vaccine priority list. Tamika Walker Kelly, president of the educators association, criticized Cooper's decision to pressure districts to go forward with more in-person instruction.

Kelly said in a statement that "without the widespread vaccination of educators and strictly enforced social distancing, it is impossible for many schools to open safely. ... If Governor Cooper feels so strongly about resuming in-person instruction quickly, then he should support educators and immediately bring the full weight of his office to bear to get all educators vaccinated by the end of this month, just as 25 other states have been able to do."

## NC prisons offer incentives for offenders to get vaccine

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — Most North Carolina prisoners can get five days knocked off their sentences if they receive COVID-19 vaccinations, state corrections officials said last week.

A package of incentives, which also include extra visitations and a free 10-minute phone call, were unveiled a few weeks after prison leaders said they were considering ways to motivate prisoners to obtain the two necessary doses. "We think we've put together a high impact package," Commissioner of Prisons Todd Ishee said.

About 21,000 of the 29,000 offenders behind bars are eligible for sentence reductions. Those who aren't would receive \$5 prison canteen credits. The system has received 3,300 vaccine doses from the state, prison spokesman Brad Deen said, with another 2,000 doses expected next week. Vaccinations are currently voluntary for prisoners and staff.

While 850 offenders have

received their first dose so far, about 2,800 of the 14,100 staffers have taken their first shots, the Department of Public Safety said. The staff total includes people who received doses that were separate from the prisons' supply. About 530 prisoners have active COVID-19 cases, and eight offenders are hospitalized, the department said. Forty-two prisoners have suffered COVID-related deaths during the pandemic.

Confederate battle flag appearing on a specialty license plate.

NCDMV said it will continue to recognize the N.C. Division of Sons of Confederate Veterans as a civic organization entitled to a specialty plate, but the recognition does not entitle it to dictate the contents of the government speech on that plate. It had received complaints about plates bearing the Confederate flag in light of nationwide protests over the death of George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis.

The agency said it remains open to considering an alternative design and would resume with issuing a specialty plate for Sons of Confederate Veterans members upon approval. But until such an agreement is made, it will "either issue SCV members standard plates and refund any specialty-plate fees paid or provide them with different specialty plates," according to the statement.

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### BUSINESS BRIEFS

**DURHAM CHAMBER**  
\* Feb. 11, 4-4:45 p.m. - 2021 Annual Meeting. Register at [durhamchamber.org](http://durhamchamber.org).

**ENTREPRENEURS**  
Innovate Durham is accepting applications for its 2021 Innovate Durham program. Contact Darin Johnson at [darin.johnson@durhamnc.gov](mailto:darin.johnson@durhamnc.gov). Deadline: Feb. 15.

**RALEIGH CHAMBER**  
\* Feb. 18, 9-11 a.m. - Community Success Forum online event. Register at [raleighchamber.org](http://raleighchamber.org). Deadline: Feb. 17.

**OPENINGS**  
\* iCRYO will open its first cryotherapy company in the state on Feb. 13 at North Hills at 200 Park at North Hills St., Suite 150. Visit [www.icryo.com](http://www.icryo.com).

\* Brier Pointe Retirement Community will hold a groundbreaking ceremony Feb. 18, 11:30 a.m., 5180 Paramount Parkway, Morrisville.

\* Capriotti's Sandwich Shop is now open at 302 Colonades Way, Suite D209, Cary.

Send business briefs to [info@triangletribune.com](mailto:info@triangletribune.com).



## NC jury trials are back. Will jury of peers?

By Yanqi Xu  
THE POLICY WATCH

After state Supreme Court Chief Justice Paul Newby let a statewide pause to most in-person court proceedings expire, some jurisdictions are pressing ahead with jury trials. With COVID-19 still sickening thousands of North Carolinians each day, however, state courts are bracing for public health challenges while trying to resolve court backlogs.

Some North Carolinians who received a jury summons told Policy Watch that they felt conflicted: As much as they wished to fulfill their civic duty, they had to ask for deferral because of health risk concerns for them and their families. All but one of North Carolina's 100 counties are in the red or orange tier, showing critical and substantial community spread of the virus, according to the NCDHSS County Alert System.

Since everyone's ability to serve varies during the pandemic, it could lead to an imbalance of race and socioeconomic status on juries. As CDC data show, Black and Latinx people are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 symptoms, hospitalizations and deaths, and might, therefore, be less willing or able to serve on a jury. That raises questions about the racial makeup of juries, and if those panels truly reflect their communities.

Durham County Chief Public Defender Dawn Baxton is concerned about defendants' constitutional right to due process. "Because of COVID, the members of the jury that present and are impaneled to serve will not be an equitable representation of the community in which the accused lives," Baxton said in an email. Questions concerning jury selection biases can also potentially lead to more appeals, and in turn slow the process of resolving the cases.

Several trial court administrators told Policy Watch that they send jury summons at least a month in advance. Each county has its own jury trial resumption plan developed in consultation with public health experts under former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Cheri Beasley's emergency directives. Compared to pre-pandemic times, there are generally fewer jury trials per week. For example, Wake County is scheduling only one weekly jury trial. Courts are using other public areas in courtrooms instead of jury boxes to seat jurors.

Prospective jurors can also be excused from jury duty or request a deferral to serve at another time. Durham County, for instance, doesn't require jurors to give a reason to request a deferral. In some counties, one can call the county clerk and ask to be deferred or excused from jury duty.

Face covering is also required for anyone in common areas of courtrooms, pursuant to Chief Justice Paul Newby's recent order. State statutes impose a fine of up to \$50 for failure to appear, but court officials have the discretion over enforcement.

James Drennan is a professor at the UNC School of Government who served as the director of Administrative Office of the Courts from 1993-15. "The important function [of jury trials] pushes the system to try to do it as quickly as possible and as reasonably as possible," he said. "But yet they've got to continue to be aware of and sensitive to the public health issues that are associated with any gatherings."

Durham County Superior Court impaneled a jury of 12 and two alternates last Wednesday for an animal cruelty case starting last week. Sixty-two out of 200 summoned reported to the court, according to the clerk's office. "The resumption of jury trials is kind of like the first robin

of spring," said Durham County Clerk Archie Smith, describing the first jury trial in the county since the pandemic. He said restarting the trials would signal to jurors that they should be confident they can attend court proceedings safely. "It would mean that better things are coming," Smith said.

The inability for juries to hear cases can change the dynamics of negotiation in criminal and civil cases, especially regarding plea bargains, Drennan said. In general, the longer trials take, the more difficult it is for witnesses to show up and the more likely it is that their memory of the event might fade. Resuming jury trials was categorized as a 'high-risk activity' — and a high priority for courts by the COVID-19 Task Force assembled by former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Cheri Beasley.

Because they can typically be disposed of more quickly, the Task Force recommended that civil cases, lower-level felonies, and misdemeanor appeals that are expected to take less than one week should be heard by a jury first. The senior resident judge of each judicial district makes the final decision.

Durham County District Attorney Satana Deberry said defendants have a right to trial. Her office is prioritizing cases where prosecutors have thoroughly reviewed the evidence, satisfied discovery obligations, and exhausted plea negotiations, she said. Jury trials cannot be easily moved online because lawyers need to ensure that jurors heard the same information, and to observe their facial expressions, Drennan said.

Baxton said that some safety measures also impair the ability for communication between defense and their counsel. "Until the pandemic is under control, it will be very difficult for clients to receive a fair trial," Baxton said.

## NC 'COVID motel' may pose problems for reentering citizens

By Nadia Ramlagan  
N.C. NEWS SERVICE

DURHAM - Attorneys are seeking answers from the North Carolina Department of Public Safety about its pilot program that houses men being released from prison at a Durham motel so they can quarantine for two weeks.

According to a letter recently sent to DPS officials by Emancipate NC, a legal and policy advocacy organization, some individuals are being detained beyond the quarantine period or are being sent back to prison for violating vague and legally unsupported motel rules.

Emancipate Staff Attorney Ian Mance said he supports the effort to increase housing options for people who are reentering society during the pandemic. But he said he's concerned the program may conflict with state law.

"The general statutes don't empower DPS to extend people's incarceration in this way, and that's

really what this hotel in Durham seems to be," said Mance.

"They said in press statements that they're not holding people, but anyone who visits the hotel can see that's not true. People are not free to leave, and those that have attempted to have in some cases been sent back to jail or prison."

He noted that the average length of stay at the motel is 18 days and says multiple residents have been detained for a month or longer.

The Durham motel is the first of its kind, but there are plans to expand the program to other parts of the state. DPS has said the men are not being held, and that the motel option is part of post-release supervision.

Mance pointed out that some motel residents have serious medical conditions but aren't receiving health care.

He said one of his clients went for weeks without his medication.

"He was someone who had significant medical is-

suues and had a number of prescriptions, for which he was only given a two-week supply," said Mance. "They were unable to find a placement for him so they extended his stay an additional month, effectively. He was really there for about a month and a half."

Yet Mance said he doesn't think the program should be shut down. He said expanded housing options are critical for people being released from prison during a pandemic, and notes many re-entering citizens, including many of the men living at the motel, have nowhere else to go.

"My hope is that we can, through dialogue, just make some tweaks to this program so that we can address the legal concerns, and that will be how it gets resolved," said Mance.

One hundred ninety-one individuals have completed their quarantines at the Durham motel.

Around 83 residents were on site as of mid-January.



## What to know before deducting a home office

Continued from page 2A  
alone. But if that home office also doubles as a guest bedroom, it wouldn't qualify. Same goes for if you're using that space to do your day job. The IRS takes the word "exclusively" pretty seriously here when it says you need to use the space exclusively for your business purposes.

\* There needs to be a clear division between your home office space and your personal space. That doesn't mean you have to have an entire room that you use as an office to take the deduction, though. Suppose you have a desk area in that extra bedroom. You can still claim a portion of the room as long as there's a marker between your office space and the rest of the room.

\* To deduct your home office, it needs to be your principal place of business. But that doesn't mean you have to conduct all your business activities in the space. If you're a handy-

man and you get paid to fix things at other people's houses but you handle the bulk of your paperwork, billing and phone calls in your home office, that's allowed. There are some exceptions if you operate a day care center or you store inventory. If either of these scenarios apply, check out the IRS rules.

\* If you use 20% of your home as an office, you can deduct 20% of your mortgage or rent. But that's not all you can deduct. You're also allowed to deduct expenses like real estate taxes, homeowner insurance and utilities, though in this example, you'd only be allowed to deduct 20% of any of these expenses.

Be careful here, though. You can only deduct expenses for the part of the home you use for business purposes.

So, using the example above, if you pay someone to mow your lawn or you're painting your kitchen, you don't get to deduct 20% of the ex-

penses. You'll also need to account for depreciation if you own the home. That can get complicated. Consider consulting with a tax professional in this situation.

\* The home office deduction has a notorious reputation as an audit trigger, but it's mostly undeserved. Deducting your home office expenses is perfectly legal, provided that you follow the IRS guidelines. A more likely audit trigger: You deduct a huge amount of expenses relative to the income you report, regardless of whether they're related to a home office.

It's essential to be ready in case you are audited, though. Make sure you can provide a copy of your mortgage or lease, insurance policies, tax records, utility bills, etc., so you can prove your deductions were warranted. You'll also want to take pictures and be prepared to provide a diagram of your setup to the IRS if necessary.

## Black Democrats take issue with lt. governor

Continued from page 1A

face of the continued inequities people of color face every day in our society," Richardson said. "As many have said before me, if we do not remember our history, we are bound to repeat it. Teaching our children the painful past of our country is a necessary and important step in the fight for racial equality and creating that more perfect union we strive to be."

## FIND CERTAINTY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES.

When faced with times like these, anxiety about the future can easily take hold. It's why WUNC is committed to providing fact-based news that helps keep you informed and eases fear of the unknown. For North Carolinians who seek to make sense of their current world, WUNC is the trusted source they can always rely on.

**wunc 91.5**  
NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC RADIO

wunc.org





# Durham minister honored for 'being a voice for others'

By Freda Freeman

CORRESPONDENT

DURHAM - Those who know the Reverend Annette Love say she is the embodiment of her last name. Love was recently recognized as a recipient of Duke Chapel's Humanitarian Service Award for her "commitment to service and simplicity."

"I have personally through my work at Duke Chapel been in ministry with Rev. Love with people experiencing homelessness, people who have suffered from gun violence and whose families have suffered from the impact of gun violence, with people reentering the community from prisons and have seen her live up to her name," said the Rev. Breana Van Velzen.

Attendees at the virtual ceremony thanked Love for her help and support, saying she has dedicated her life to "seeing people other people have forgotten" and being the glue that helps keep the community together.

Love is a longtime volunteer with the Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham and is a member of its Vigil and Community Ministry leadership team. She is a board member at Jubilee Home, which provides transitional housing and services for formerly incarcerated men aged 17 to 24, and she runs her own Faith-Based Service Network, which helps people suffering from abuse.

"We are all God's children, and we should treat everybody the same. My ministry is in the community because I love being out there with God's people, trying to make a difference. I'm grateful to be a part of the Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham, supporting families of murdered victims, which is something that should not happen, but it does. And, in all that pain and suffering, there has to be something we call hope, so if I can spread hope, that's exactly what I'm going to do," Love said.

"And, there's Jubilee Home, which I love dearly as well. I love it because our executive director, Dave Crispell, saw a need



The Reverend Annette Love

to help those coming out of incarceration. ...I came to serve. I want to serve, that is my ministry."

Love began working in the community more than 18 years ago through the Durham Crisis Response Center. As a survivor of domestic violence, she wanted to be a trusted source the women could relate to. "...when I was in that situation, I felt like there was nobody because I was here in Durham by myself and didn't have family here. So, when I got out of the marriage, I said I'm going to see what I can do to help other people," she said.

Love wanted to help bridge the divide between the community at large and the faith community, which led to her work with the RCND. She began speaking at local churches to provide information to help educate people about domestic violence.

"When we're hurting, we rely on our religion to kind of see us through, so I wanted to make sure that the church and communities of faith knew what we were offering. When someone is hurting and suffering, that's the

first place they go, so you want to make sure that the church understands about violence, because you don't want to send someone back into a volatile situation," she said.

Love also created Faith-Based Service Network, a website to provide information about domestic violence and sexual assault. The website also provides links to resources to help people with various needs, including human trafficking, child abuse, elder abuse, refugee rights, suicide prevention, homelessness, and drug addiction.

In addition to Duke Chapel's Humanitarian Service Award, Love is also a past recipient of the Hidden Figures Award. Love said she is honored and humbled by the recognition and hopes the life she lives speaks for her.

"I just want to be a light unto the world," she said. "With all the madness and chaos, we need light. I'm hoping to be a light in a bad situation. I want to be the peace and harmony in a bad situation. I think if I can just go and talk to someone, maybe my light will shine, maybe it will change something."



Arlacia Simmons

## Former Durham resident publishes spiritual autobiography

STAFF REPORTS

Author Arlecia Simmons starts off 2021 with the release of her second book,

"Diggin' for Intimacy: Sex, Sensuality, and Loving God."

The book invites readers to journey alongside the writer as they explore their own beliefs about intimacy and sexuality.

"Readers are going to be taken on a literary adventure as they navigate this spiritual autobiography that shares a story we don't often see women publicly sharing. I say it's the book church girls didn't know they needed because it explores issues that don't get discussed in religious homes or churches. We just had to figure it out, and, for many, it ends in some not-so-great outcomes," said Simmons.

As an ordained minister whose first profession was in print journalism, Simmons recognizes the

powers of storytelling and invites students to chronicle their own experiences by ending each chapter with three reflection questions.

"Readers will be able to dig into their past challenges with relationships and reflect on God's presence during various moments in their lives," she said.

The idea for the book has been in the making for a minute. In 2007, Simmons was invited to pitch a similar story to an imprint of a major publisher, but the concept wasn't a good fit or one they thought they could market.

"In a way, I'm glad this process was delayed," Simmons explained. "That opportunity would have allowed me to write a very safe and 'sanitized' book that probably would have done well. However, this is the riskier and more transparent book needed at this time. Confronting death is more palpable each day, and readers don't have time to navigate fluff."

The book invites women,

especially those who are Christian and unmarried, to engage in a conversation about sex that many haven't been able to have because of shame and expected judgment.

But regardless of how hesitant a reader may feel, Simmons guarantees you won't be disappointed with what you find.

In this sophomore book release, Simmons partners with Jamaican-born artist Nastasia Reid for the cover illustration. Reid and Simmons are both graduates of the University of Iowa.

The author has also earned journalism degrees from Winthrop University and the University of South Carolina; she earned a Master of Divinity degree from Duke University Divinity School.

While attending Duke, Simmons was an associate minister at First Calvary Baptist Church, where she was the minister to the Single In Love With Christ Ministry.

Visit <https://arlecia.com> for more information.

## 5 tips to set your business up for success in 2021

NNPA NEWSWIRE

Online and mobile banking can help business owners monitor and manage their accounts from anywhere and make analyzing cash flow easier. In fact, 73% of small businesses utilize these services, according to Barlow Research. What 2020 exhibited is the ability of this functionality to help in preparing for uncertain circumstances, such as not being able to visit a physical bank branch for an extended period. Utilizing tools like these can provide extra insurance against potential challenges that may arise.

The possibility of not seeing economic or business recovery until at least mid-2021 highlights the importance of planning for multiple scenarios.

The challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic hardships can make 2020 a difficult year to look back on. Forty-six percent of small business owners surveyed in the Q4 Wells Fargo Small Business Index reported decreases in revenues, while the prospect of closing their business was most frequently ranked as the top concern. Nonetheless, even the most challenging times can yield opportunities for the future. 2020 provided hard truths, but also valuable insights that small business owners can use at the outset of 2021 to move forward.

Nearly one third (29%) of businesses planned to start using a website in 2020. Luckily for those that followed through on that plan, 2020 showed that having a strong online presence, user experience and functionality can not only be a competitive advantage in the marketplace, but also critical to a business' survival.

Eighty-six percent of consumers rely on the internet to find a local business. With a well-rounded digital strategy, including a website and social media, business owners can build awareness and leverage how people are searching for information online. Further, ensuring a positive user experience with these channels can help set up an environment for business growth.

Online and mobile banking can help business owners monitor and manage their accounts from anywhere and make analyzing cash flow easier. In fact, 73% of small businesses utilize these services, according to Barlow Research. What 2020 exhibited is the ability of this functionality to help in preparing for uncertain circumstances, such as not being able to visit a physical bank branch for an extended period. Utilizing tools like these can provide extra insurance against potential challenges that may arise.

Almost one third (29%) of business owners said in

November that the closure of their business was their top concern, while 57% said they did not anticipate recovery for businesses like theirs until at least the second half of 2021. With recent surges in COVID-19 cases, one key thing business owners can do to withstand these challenges and to help safeguard negative impacts to the business down the line is to ensure the right technology is fully utilized to serve operations, including sufficient internet bandwidth and wireless capabilities.

Networking can help small business owners through crises like COVID-19 and help facilitate a potential reset or even rebuilding of a business in the coming year. Whether it's a traditional chamber of commerce or networking group or an online or social media-based community, networking groups can provide ideas and resources for growth, and may also help with recruiting talent, finding vendors, or even generating sales.

The possibility of not seeing economic or business recovery until at least mid-2021 highlights the importance of planning for multiple scenarios. Having a backup plan for each area of your business, from sales to operations to marketing, will help mitigate potential negative impacts of unforeseen circumstances.

### AROUND THE TRIANGLE

#### RALEIGH ALZHEIMER'S

The Alzheimer's Association will host "Navigating a Dementia Diagnosis: What does this diagnosis mean?" Feb. 10, noon to 1:15 p.m., virtually. Visit [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org).

#### TESTING

COVID screening and testing is Feb. 10, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., St. Aug's George Williams Athletic Complex. Contact: Cindy Love at (919) 516-5190.

#### MARCH

Annual HKonJ Mass Moral March is virtual on Feb. 13, 10 a.m. to noon. Visit [naacpc.org](http://naacpc.org).

#### SUSPENDED

GoRaleigh R-Line will be temporarily suspended beginning Feb. 14 due to low ridership.

#### COVID

NCDHHS has released a

hotline and website where residents can get vaccine questions answered: 888-675-4567 or YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov.

#### DURHAM VACCINES

Durham County Department of Health is giving vaccine shots at Southern High School. To schedule an appointment, call (919) 560-4357.

#### CEMETERY

The next guided tour of the Geer Cemetery, a black burial ground, is Feb. 13. Visit [durhaminplainsight.com](http://durhaminplainsight.com).

#### BLACK WALL STREET

A talk on the founding father of Durham's Black Wall Street, Aaron McDuffie Moore, is Feb. 16, noon to 1:30 p.m., via Zoom. Visit [www.preservationdurham.org](http://www.preservationdurham.org).

#### CHAPEL HILL SEMINAR

UNC School of Social Work will host a family and disability seminar on "Connections Matter: Building Caring Connection to Improve Resiliency" Feb. 9, 12:30-1:30 p.m. Email [akshata@email.unc.edu](mailto:akshata@email.unc.edu).

#### STORYTELLING

Storyteller Donna Washington will perform Feb. 10, 10:30-11:15 a.m., via Zoom. Call (919) 918-7364.

#### AWARDS

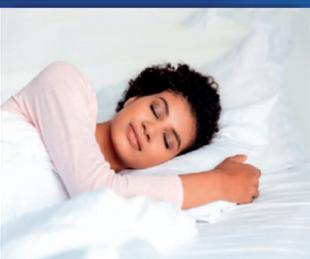
Nominations for 31st annual Pauli Murray Awards are being accepted. Visit [www.orangecountync.gov](http://www.orangecountync.gov). Deadline: Feb. 12.

#### MISC. SCHOLARSHIPS:

\* Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation is recruiting college interns for the summer. Deadline: Feb. 15. Email: [mayar@zsr.org](mailto:mayar@zsr.org).

## Triangle Tribune Business Spotlight

### WEBINAR SERIES



Sleep Your Way To A Better Life

Your snoring may be a sign of something more serious. The life-changing and deadly consequences of untreated sleep apnea.

**Speaker:**  
**DR. JASON WOODEN**

Thursday, February 25, 2021

7p - 7:30p

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The Triangle Tribune

## Book and doc to showcase NCCU to a wider audience

North Carolina Central men's basketball is on a hot streak. No, I'm not talking games, although the Eagles are 3-0 after finally getting back on the hardwood. But this is bigger - much bigger.

First, bestselling author John Grisham will publish his first basketball novel titled "Sooley" in April. Seventeen-year-old Samuel Sooley is a native of South Sudan who comes to the United States to play in a basketball tournament. While away, war breaks out in his home country, leaving him stranded in the States.



BONITTA  
BEST

His only hope of return and saving his family is to snag an athletic scholarship at NCCU and eventually turning pro.

But before "Sooley" is released, the basketball team will have appeared on ESPN+ in an eight-episode documentary series called "Why Not Us: North Carolina Central Basketball."

The docuseries is produced by Roadside Entertainment, NBA star Chris Paul, who was recently enrolled at Winston-Salem State, and WSSU famous alumnus Stephen A. Smith, under the umbrella of ESPN+ and The Undeclared, a website dedicated entirely to HBCUs.

"Why Not Us" will spotlight the importance and uniqueness of HBCUs by chronicling the NCCU men's basketball team and the challenges they encounter throughout a season in my home state of North Carolina," said Paul, whose production company is called Ohh Dipp!!! Productions. "HBCUs face challenges to compete at the same level as PWIs (predominately white institutions) due to lack of funding, resources and awareness. Despite the obstacles they face, 'Why Not Us' shines a light on these amazing Black student-athletes who attend HBCUs, and how these historically significant schools continue to enrich not only the Black community but our nation as a whole."

It's no surprise that the Eagles were chosen. Coach LeVelle Moton knows every player that's ever been born. And the respect factor swings both ways. Moton and Paul are close friends.

The docuseries follows the team and staff during the pandemic-shortened 2020-21 season. But it's not just about basketball - how boring that would be.

Viewers will get an in-depth look into the psyche of students and student-athletes at an HBCU. How, despite having to make do with less, they still manage to thrive and succeed.

Paul interviewed several famous HBCU graduates: filmmaker Spike Lee (Morehouse), actress Taraji P. Henson (Howard), fashion designer and Fear of God founder Jerry Lorenzo (Florida A&M), and others.

"As a graduate of an HBCU, any issue that allows us to illuminate the great challenges that HBCUs perpetually face, yet overcome day after day, is something that is going to garner my interest," said Smith, whose production company is called Mr. SAS Inc. "After asking my coach, the late, great Clarence 'Big House' Gaines, what I could do for him in return for all he's done for me, his answer was very simple: 'Do all you can for this university, for any HBCU. Don't let the world try and forget about it.'"

"This project is a step in that direction. It's not just a project or a piece of work. It's a mission. And I'm incredibly delighted and grateful that Chris Paul and ESPN asked me to come on board to make this happen."

The docuseries begins Feb. 17 exclusively on ESPN+, which is a paid streaming service separate from ESPN.

# Sports



Former Southern High School star Josh Hall skipped college for the NBA. He wasn't drafted in the 2020 NBA Draft.

## Bull City highlighted in new 'Hoop Portraits' sports documentary

By John McCann

CORRESPONDENT

DURHAM — Tracy McGrady made it look easy going straight from Mount Zion Christian Academy to the Toronto Raptors as the ninth overall pick of the 1997 NBA Draft.

"Hoop Portraits" is a documentary that keeps it real by training the camera on former Southern High School basketball player Josh Hall as he went undrafted in the 2020 NBA Draft.

The documentary also features Ty-Shon Alexander, who played high school ball in Charlotte, hooped three seasons at Creighton University and, too, didn't hear his name called in 2020.

"What attracted us to their story was the inherent tension that would remain

present until the moment they received a call that would determine their professional fate," said "Hoop Portraits" director Taylor Sharp. "Hearing their name called on draft night was never guaranteed for these players, and that's a story in sports that's not as often told."

"Hoop Portraits" is an anthology documentary, meaning Sharp and co-producer Holland Randolph Gallagher will release more episodes over time.

This first one about Alexander and Hall is called "Two Ways to the League" on Feb. 8 at 8 p.m. on the Twitch platforms of both the NBA and the NBA G League, as well as on YouTube and Facebook.

Sharp and Gallagher run Blue Cup Productions (bluecupproductions.com), a Durham-based television

and film production company. The title of the pilot episode is a nod toward the two-way NBA contracts Hall and Alexander signed. Two-way contracts allow players to spend time both developing their games in the G League while also getting in bona fide NBA reps.

Hall signed a two-way contract with the Oklahoma City Thunder. Alexander inked a two-way deal with the Phoenix Suns.

"Your draft status doesn't matter once the ball gets tipped," said Jeff McInnis, who honed his game under Dean Smith as a point guard for the North Carolina Tar Heels before distributing the ball in the NBA.

Alexander and Hall trained with McInnis in Charlotte to get ready for the NBA Draft.

"The opportunity in front

Please see DOCUMENTARY/7A

## COLLEGE CORNER



Devin Palmer



Anthony Tarke



Bianca Lockamy



Bianca Lockamy

## NCCU extends home win streak

Senior Jordan Perkins added his name to some exclusive company Monday night.

The Greensboro native became just the second North Carolina Central player to reach 500 career assists in the Eagles 91-77 victory over South Carolina State.

The Eagles then topped Monday's win with a thrilling comeback over the Bulldogs Tuesday. Down by 17 in the first half (which is one reason why CC never watches the first half of games), NCCU rallied to edge SCSU 64-63 for its 19th straight home victory.

Senior C.J. Keyser put his team up for good with a three-point play with 50 seconds left.

The Eagles remain at home for this weekend's two-game matchup against Florida A&M.

\* **Notes:** Freshman guard Justin Wright was named MEAC rookie of the week after a 12-point, six-rebound and six-assist night against Carver College last weekend.

On the women's side, NCCU has had its last four matchups postponed. The team returns to the court Feb. 13 against S.C. State in Durham.

### MEAC tourney sponsor

The Air Force Reserve is the new title partner for the 2021 MEAC Tournament. The Reserve has also sponsored the Celebration Bowl, which pits the football champions from the MEAC and the SWAC.

"The Air Force Reserve coming on board is an excellent opportunity for both entities, and I could not be more excited," Commissioner Dennis Thomas said. "This partnership will provide our students with a chance to take advantage of what the Air Force Reserve has to offer its men and women service people, including employment opportunities."

The tournament is March 10-13 at the Norfolk Scope Arena in Virginia.

### SAAC Board

Virginia Union junior guard Bianca Lockamy recently was named to the National Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. She will represent the CIAA.

The Greenville, North Carolina, native earned a 3.8 GPA during the 2018-19 season. She sat out last season with an injury.

"Honestly, this honor could have gone to anybody in the CIAA. The fact that God continues to bless me and makes me the person who I am to receive these positions is just amazing," she said.

Please see NCCU/7A

## HBCU FOOTBALL



Former North Carolina Central cornerback Bryan Mills.

## NCCU's Mills shines in Bowl, receives coveted NFL invite

By Bonitta Best

editor@triangletribune.com

North Carolina Central senior cornerback Bryan Mills' impressive performance at last weekend's Reese's Senior Bowl earned him an invitation to the coveted NFL Combine.

Mills is just the second Eagle in the Division I era to receive the invite. Former defensive back and current Tampa Bay Buccaneer Ryan Smith was the first.

The Combine evaluates top football players through workouts, exams, testing and interviews.

Most of the evaluations this year will be virtual, although workouts will be

held on campus during pro days.

Mills decided to skip his senior season to focus exclusively on the NFL.

\* Also making a big impression at the Senior Bowl was Grambling State offensive lineman David Moore Jr. More was named the top OL on the American team after a week of practice. Moore and Mills were the only HBCU players invited to the bowl.

### Bring your own boom box

There will be no visiting marching bands during the SWAC spring football season.

The conference made the announcement late last

week that only the home team band will be allowed to perform.

And all contests that are either classics or played at a neutral site will be bandless.

"It became imperative for us to make comprehensive decisions that take into full account where we are with the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic," SWAC Commissioner Charles McClelland said.

"...it became abundantly clear that the elimination of all travel for SWAC member institutions' bands was a significant step toward ensuring an optimal health and safety environment for

Please see MILLS/7A

## Bull City highlighted in sports documentary

Continued from page 6A

of them is to play basketball in the NBA — no matter what the contract says, they got one. Now prove that you belong and that you're there to stay," McInnis said. "This documentary will turn into something really valuable because they're going to make it, they're going to be big-time players in the NBA, so this will show people how they got there."

The documentary takes

viewers behind the curtain, as it were. "It's a rare but thrilling opportunity to witness the most important day in someone's life; a single moment that represents the culmination of their life's work up to this point," Sharp said.

Hall is the first player since McGrady to go straight to the NBA from a North Carolina high school. Before deciding to go pro, Hall committed to play basketball for N.C. State.

The G League is an op-

tion available to players who would rather get paid while developing their basketball skills as opposed to working on their craft in college.

"The NBA G League is proud to play an important role in a player's journey to the NBA," G League President Shareef Abdur-Rahim said. "The G League has long cultivated NBA talent, and we're thrilled when we can help give players a platform to tell their stories along the way."



Southern Human Jukebox Marching Band.



Grambling State offensive lineman David Moore Jr.

## Mills, Moore shine at Reese's Senior Bowl

Continued from page 6A

the upcoming spring football season."

### Football schedules

North Carolina Central, which opted out of spring football, released its fall football schedule. Eagle fans have much to look forward to with five home games, the MEAC/SWAC Challenge and two nonconference contests against rivals North Carolina A&T and Winston-Salem State.

The Eagles open the season Sept. 5 against Alcorn State in the Challenge in Atlanta. The remaining nonconference schedule includes Marshall, WSSU, A&T, Mississippi Valley State and Tennessee Tech, in that order.

NCCU's conference schedule, which consists of five games, begins Oct. 23 at Morgan State. Homecoming is Nov. 6 against Norfolk State.

\* CIAA champion Bowie

State released its '21 football schedule.

The Bulldogs have a heck of a nonconference schedule with games against Delaware State, Saginaw Valley and New Haven (Conn.)

BSU has rivals Virginia State and Virginia Union back-to-back Oct. 16 and 23 before closing out the season against Lincoln (Pa.) and Elizabeth City State. The CIAA Championship Game is Nov. 13.

## NCCU extends streak

Continued from page 6A

### Watch Lists

Howard junior infielder Kalita Dennis has been named to the 2021 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year Top 50 Watch List. Dennis is a two-time All-MEAC selection who finished the shortened 2020 season with a .382 batting average, 29 hits, five home runs and 22 RBIs.

\* Coppin State senior guard Anthony Tarke has been added to the Lou Henson Award Midseason Watch List. The award honors the nation's top Division I mid-major player. Tarke is the only MEAC player named to the list. He is averaging 15.8 points, 8.3 rebounds, 3.3 assists, 3.1 steals and 1.7 blocks per game.



COURTESY

Naomi Osaka

## Naomi Osaka invests in North Carolina soccer team

STAFF REPORTS

CARY — Global sports icon and tennis superstar Naomi Osaka has invested in the North Carolina Courage. Osaka is the first investor in the Courage since Steve Malik acquired and relocated the team to North Carolina in 2017.

Named Forbes' Highest Paid Female Athlete in 2020, Osaka is showing her commitment to inspiring the next generation of female athletes by investing her time and money. "The women who have invested in me growing up made me who I am today, and I cannot think of where my life would be without them," she said. "My investment in the North Carolina Courage is far beyond just being a team owner, it's an investment in amazing women who are role models and leaders in their fields and inspirations to all young female athletes. I also admire everything the Courage does for diversity and equality in the com-

munity, which I greatly look forward to supporting and driving forward."

Osaka, the daughter of a Haitian father and Japanese mother, was the first Asian player to hold the No. 1 ranking in singles and the first Japanese player to win a Grand Slam. The 23-year-old was named Sports Illustrated Sportsperson of the Year in 2020 for both a strong showing on the court and her off-the-court activism. Osaka, like the Courage, used her platform as a stage for social activism in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

"I am thrilled to welcome Naomi as an owner of the North Carolina Courage," said Malik. "Naomi embodies the values we have been striving to cultivate at our club, and she brings an invaluable viewpoint on topics beyond sports. I cannot think of anyone better to help us as we continue to make a difference in our community and inspire the next generation

of women."

The two are no strangers to success, as Osaka has won three Grand Slam titles and the Courage have won six trophies in four years. The Courage are part of the largest youth to professional soccer club in the U.S. with over 13,000 players, which aligns organically with The Naomi Osaka Play Academy, an initiative that aims to change girls' lives through play and sport. Osaka's program is part of Nike's Made to Play commitment to get more kids moving around the world. The Play Academy provides a fun, positive experience for young girls with a focus on gender-inclusive coaching and programming to help break down barriers for girls in sports.

The Courage are also looking to harnessing Osaka's passion and talent for fashion, with plans to incorporate the tennis star into its design decisions in 2021.



COURTESY

## Washington's King 1st Black female assistant position coach

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington promoted Jennifer King to assistant running backs coach Tuesday, making her the first Black female assistant position coach in the NFL.

She is the second woman in league history to be an assistant position coach after Tampa Bay's assistant defensive line coach Lori Locust.

King spent the 2020 season as a full-year coaching intern under Ron Rivera and worked with running backs coach Randy Jordan. Rivera said King came to Washington eager for the opportunity and is deserving of the promotion.

"The sky is truly the limit for her," Rivera said. "She got the chance to experience not only the in-season work that goes into being a full-time coach in this league but also the count-

less hours that are spent preparing in the offseason, as well.

"She demonstrated all of the qualities that are needed to work full time on my staff. She is a hard worker, a great communicator and a quality person. Coach King is always eager to learn and has shown tremendous growth since starting here last season."

King previously interned for Rivera with the Carolina Panthers and has also been an assistant at Dartmouth College and for the Arizona Hotshots of the Alliance of American Football.

"I am very pleased to have coach King back to assist me full time in the running backs room," Jordan said. "She was extremely helpful last year in seeing the game from a different perspective, and she was a tremendous communicator in our room. I look

forward to continuing to collaborate as we move forward in our program and as she moves forward in her coaching career."

Washington's playoff game against the now-Super Bowl-bound Buccaneers was the first NFL playoff game to have a female coach on each sideline.

Tampa Bay had two: Locust and assistant strength and conditioning coach Maral Javadifar, and coach Bruce Arians called women in coaching "the wave of the future."

"This game, it's a tremendous game," Rivera said. "It should be open to everybody in terms of opportunities to play, opportunities to coach or opportunities to lead the organization. I think that's an important message that the league is putting out there."

## NFL continues to pass on hiring new Black coaches

By Tim Dahlberg

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Coaches understand before they sign employment contracts that they are hired to be fired, something that's particularly true in the NFL, where the only measure of success is a playoff slot at the end of the season.

That's why there was no real outcry when Anthony Lynn was let go by the Chargers. Lynn's team went 7-9 this season and some of his head-scratching decisions late in games caused fans to lose their hair. That Lynn is Black didn't matter when it came to getting a pink slip. A half-dozen coaches who weren't of color were also let go in the annual coaching exodus across the league.

Unfortunately, though, it seems being Black still does matter when it comes to getting hired in the first place. And that's become a problem the NFL seems increasingly unable — or unwilling — to fix.

The news that Philadelphia planned to hire Indianapolis offensive coordinator Nick Sirianni as the new head coach of the Eagles is the latest re-

minder of that. Sirianni seems qualified but, at the age of 39, he's getting an opportunity that could have gone to any number of equally deserving Black assistants. That it didn't means six of the seven coaching vacancies this offseason have now been filled. Robert Saleh was hired to coach the New York Jets as the first Muslim head coach, but there are no new Black coaches in the group.

The Rooney Rule that requires minorities be interviewed for all head coaching openings still gets Black applicants a foot in the door. But the door seems to close when it comes to making the actual hire, and recent tweaks to the rule haven't been enough to change that.

Consider this: In the three previous coaching replacement cycles before this year, 20 coaches were hired and only three were coaches of color — just one of them Black. That leaves the NFL with four minority coaches, just two of them African-American, pending a coaching hire in Texas. And that's simply unacceptable in a league where 70% of players are Black, and so are a third of the as-

sistants trying to work their way up the coaching ladder.

Yes, there have been two Black general manager hires, but that's scant consolation for those who see other inequalities at the top. "The disparity in opportunities is mind boggling," Fritz Pollard Alliance Executive Director Rod Graves said in a statement earlier in the week. "It is unfortunate that the performances of coordinators like Eric Bieniemy, Todd Bowles, Byron Leftwich, Leslie Frazier, and Joe Woods, may not meet what appears as 'evolving standards' for becoming a Black Head Coach in the NFL."

Graves, whose organization works to promote minority opportunities in the NFL, cited the annual report card issued by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at Central Florida in highlighting the NFL's issues. The 2020 edition put together by Richard Lapchick gives the NFL poor grades in racial hiring for all its executives, including head coaches.

I've spoken many times to Lapchick, a trailblazer in race issues in sports, about the NFL's hiring practices.

## HBCU NEWS



**FAYETTEVILLE STATE**  
Two books by FSU English Professor Carole Boston Weatherford were recognized with 2021 American Library Association Youth Media Awards, children's literature's highest honors.

Weatherford won a Newbery Honor for authoring "BOX: Henry Brown Mails Himself to Freedom," which is illustrated by Michele Wood. She also wrote "R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Aretha Franklin, The Queen of Soul," for which Frank Morrison won a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award.

Aimed at children in middle grades, "BOX" chronicles one of slavery's most daring escape. Heartbroken over the sale of his wife and children, Brown shipped himself from Richmond, Virginia, to Philadelphia in a wooden box.

The poetic biography features a series of six-line poems, reflecting the structure of Brown's box.

Inspired by Aretha Franklin's hit song, the picture book biography "R-E-S-P-E-C-T" riffs on the remarkable life of the iconic singer and civil rights activist.

Weatherford has au-

thored more than 50 books of poetry, nonfiction, biography, and historical fiction, mostly for young people.

She was a columnist for the Greensboro News & Record and the editorial page editor for the Winston-Salem Chronicle. Her latest book is "Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre," illustrated by Floyd Cooper.

A native of Baltimore, Maryland, and longtime Triad resident, Weatherford now lives in Johnston County.



## Raleigh artist decorates bus shelter with NC legends

By David Menconi  
VISITRALEIGH.COM

**RALEIGH** - The Together Raleigh project transformed 10 bus-stop shelters across the City of Oaks into intriguing and beautiful works of art in 2020 — worth seeking out to view even if you're not catching a bus.

One of the project's most striking works is "Nina, a Monk, and a Trane" — the work of artist Kiara Sanders at the bus shelter 1 on the north side of Pecan Road just east of South Saunders Street (on the 7 and 7L bus lines).

"Nina, a Monk, and a Trane" is a rendering of three of the most iconic North Carolina-born musicians in the state's history: Rocky Mount native Thelma Houston, an all-time great jazz pianist and composer; saxophonist John Coltrane of "Giant Steps" fame and a native of Hamlet; and Tryon-born singer Nina Simone, voice of the civil rights movement.

Sanders, a 28-year-old Raleigh native, used a digital sketchpad to draw por-

traits of all three musicians based on reference photos, each of which were transposed from black and white to color.

For backdrops, she added brightly shaded geometric shapes that look like stained-glass windows from a church. The images were printed out as a vinyl print and affixed to the bus-shelter walls.

This particular technique was something of a departure for Sanders, whose usual medium is acrylic or oil paint on canvas.

Public murals are also relatively new for her; she just started doing them last summer, including a hand-painted portrait of the legendary Piedmont blues woman Elizabeth "Libba" Cotten on a bus shelter in Chapel Hill.

But she's rarely depicting celebrities in her work.

"My main focus is portraits of people, mostly people I know who are not famous," she says. "But I also love learning about human history and psychology. It's a curiosity thing, discovering people who may have been for-

gotten about. Like Elizabeth Cotten, who I did not know about until recently seeing signs about her around the city. I just hope my artwork is educational to people in that way."

Sanders has similar educational hopes for "Nina, a Monk, and a Trane." Even though they're all figures of towering importance in musical history, their connection to North Carolina is not widely known.

"Prior to going to school at North Carolina Central, I knew very little about them," she says. "A little about Coltrane and Nina, but nothing at all about Monk. Then I went to a few programs in the jazz department and learned more about their music. I had not known they were all three from North Carolina before that."

You can find more of Sanders' work on her website or on Instagram.

*Authored by David Menconi, this piece has been produced in partnership with Raleigh Arts.*

## Raleigh leaders commit to dismantle systemic racism

STAFF REPORTS

**RALEIGH** - Local leaders are banning together to ask community members, businesses and organizations to commit to dismantling systemic racism. A Better Wake includes lead partners from Wake County Government, City of Raleigh, Raleigh Chamber, the Triangle DEI Alliance and the Raleigh-Apex NAACP, along with a coalition of leaders from the public and private sectors.

"It is critical for our corporate community to lead efforts to end systemic racism," said Raleigh Mayor Mary-Ann Baldwin, who helped initiate this effort. "In order to make change, we need to take responsibility as individuals, as businesses, as educators, as community leaders and as government officials. The City of Raleigh is proud to be part of this effort, and we thank the Chamber for their leadership."

Matt Calabria, chairman of the Wake County Board of Commissioners, said:

"Systemic racism remains one of our most complex and pernicious problems. We are committed to working together to develop community-based solutions that will close racial equity gaps."

A Better Wake seeks to galvanize the community around efforts to address racism. "We must learn to see beyond race and treat everyone with dignity and respect," states Gerald Givens Jr., president of the Raleigh-Apex NAACP. "A Better Wake seeks to address both elements of interpersonal and infrastructure to eradicate racism."

This coalition acknowledges that not all residents share the high quality of life in this region. That reality is rooted in systemic racism, which negatively affects Black and brown Americans, and creates disparities in education, health outcomes, wealth creation, and the criminal justice system. A Better Wake, convened by the Triangle Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity Alliance, powered by the Raleigh

Chamber, believes in collective impact to address this issue.

Chamber President and CEO Adrienne Cole said, "There is no place in our community or society for systemic racism. We will continue to raise awareness and stand up for inclusive prosperity."

The initiative calls for community members and organizations to visit [www.abetterwake.com](http://www.abetterwake.com) to join in committing to end racism. The website includes an action guide on practices and policies to aid collective efforts. Additionally, the website has a curated list of books, videos, and other resources to aid individuals in learning more about anti-racist concepts.

"Part of dismantling the systems of racism start with individuals changing their attitudes and behaviors, which leads to dissecting how infrastructures that are built with inherent bias," says Danya Perry, director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity with the Raleigh Chamber.

## Black History Month Read-In

STAFF REPORTS

**RALEIGH** — Celebrate literature and hear from North Carolina authors with the Fourth Annual Black History Month Read-In.

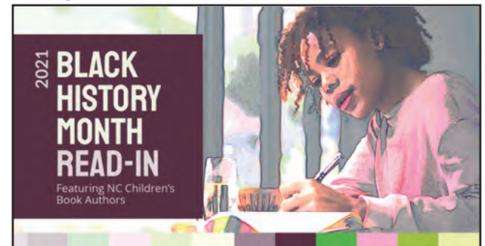
The North Carolina African American Heritage Commission, in partnership with the North Carolina State Capitol, the State Library of North Carolina, the Richard B. Harrison Community Library, Liberation Station Bookstore, and the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, is presenting the Read-In.

Throughout Black History Month, the Commission will highlight individual North Carolina children's book authors. This year's event will be entirely online to ensure the safety of authors, guests, and staff.

Each week a video will be released highlighting a different children's book author.

The videos will include an interview with the author and an excerpt from one of their books. For information regarding the video release schedule, visit [aahc.nc.gov](http://aahc.nc.gov).

**Featured authors:**



\* Tameka Fryer Brown is an award-winning picture book author. Brown will be reading an excerpt from "My Cold Plum Lemon Pie Bluesy Mood" (illustrated by Shane W. Evans).

\* Judy Allen Dodson is a librarian, archivist, and children's book author. Dodson will be reading "Escape From . . . Hurricane Katrina." Dodson has a passion for celebrating diverse children's literature and teaching children about Black history.

\* Kelly Starling Lyons is a founding member of The Brown Bookshelf, teaching artist and award-winning author of more than a dozen books that span easy readers, picture books and chapter books, fiction and nonfiction. Lyons will be reading an excerpt from "Dream Builder: The Story of Architect Philip Freelon"

(illustrated by Laura Freeman).

\* Eleanora E. Tate will be reading "A Blessing in Disguise." Tate is the author of 11 novels and numerous short stories for middle-grade readers. She is a Zora Neale Hurston Award recipient, the highest award given by the National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc., and is a former national president.

\* Carole Boston Weatherford is a New York Times best-selling author. Weatherford will be reading "Before John was a Jazz Giant" (illustrated by Sean Qualls). She recently released "Beauty Mark: A Verse Novel of Marilyn Monroe" and "R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Aretha Franklin, the Queen of Soul."

## WGU NC: Giving back to the community



Last month, staff from WGU North Carolina provided 200 bags filled with school supplies to distribute during Feed Them Friday from the Feed Them Foundation and Bethel Family Worship Center in Durham.

**JUST A REMINDER—**

Many restaurants and other businesses in your neighborhood are open and ready to serve. You can dine in (at a limited capacity) or carry out.

We know you miss your favorite Raleigh-made dishes and your favorite restaurants and retailers miss you!

**WISH YOU WERE HERE**

RALEIGH, N.C.

★ *Count ON ME* NC ★

Raleigh