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Race, Law and Continuing the Fight for Justice and Equality

Exclusive with National Bar Association President, Juan Thomas



National Bar Association (NBA) President Juan Thomas says that NBA members have been part of the transformation of building bridges of inclusiveness for the last 93 years.”

By Edwin Buggage
Dat News Weekly Editor

The National Bar Association

The National Bar Association (NBA) is the largest and oldest organization of Black lawyer’s judges

and law students in the country. Since 1925 it has a long and storied history with many of its members leading the charge and being on the forefront of the struggle advocating for full enfranchisement of African-Americans.

“We represent a network of over 65,00 members across the country and we were founded in 1925

in response to the fact that back then Black lawyers were not allowed to join the American Bar Association. Since that time, the NBA has been on the forefront of advancing issues of civil rights and social justice which many of our members have fought for such as Thurgood Marshall and Charles Hamilton Houston, who were members of the National Bar Association. Our mem-

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bers have been part of the transformation of building bridges of inclusiveness for the last 93 years," says current National Bar Association President Juan Thomas.

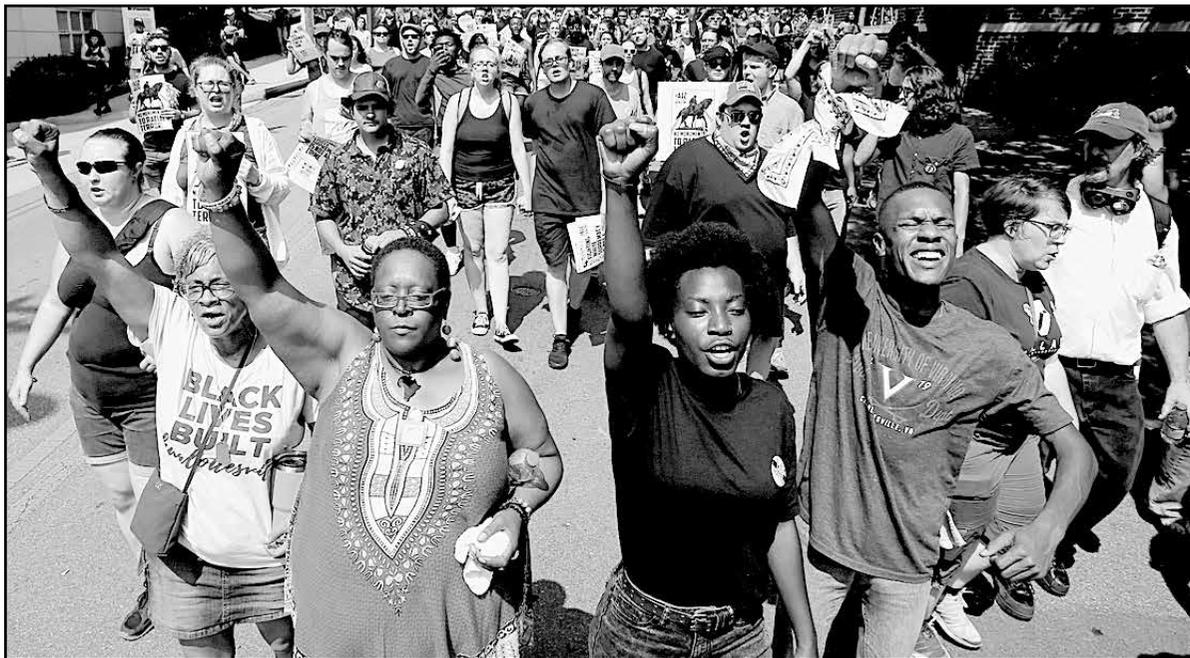
An Agenda of Black Empowerment and Social Justice

Recently, New Orleans was the site of their annual convention where they covered a host of issues facing Black America. Thomas says the discussions focused on, "Economic empowerment, social justice, the future of HBCU Law Schools, and the need to change the prosecutorial system and how we elect prosecutors. In addition to Criminal Justice Reform, Law and Technology and advancing the need for more diversity in tech and to educate the community about their voting rights in the 2018 mid-term elections coming up in November."

In recent years, the shootings of Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile and countless others, planted the seeds for the formation of Black Lives Matter and demands for reforms in the Criminal Justice System. NBA President Thomas says the National Bar Association is working hard on the problem of the killing of unarmed Black men by law enforcement, or those who take the law in their own hands and using the controversial Stand your Ground Law as a defense which was used to acquit George Zimmerman in the Trayvon Martin Case.

Speaking further on some of the work some of the members are doing he says, "We have Paul Butler, a law professor at Georgetown and legal analyst who appears on several network new programs, who has done a lot of work in this area. We are also discussing the need for more progressive community minded prosecutors. But too often, Civil Rights Advocates on the left don't want to become prosecutors. But this is where Criminal Justice Reform begins, because they have a lot of power and discretion in how they prosecute and try cases and who they charge and who they don't charge."

Continuing he says, "We have to move to a point where Black people are not charged for crimes that White people are not charged for, but unfortunately, around the country you see a lot of that. We are working with the ACLU, focusing on how our community



The NBA membership is also discussing the need for more progressive community minded prosecutors. But too often, Civil Rights advocates on the left don't want to become prosecutors. Understanding that criminal justice reform begins with prosecutors who have the power and discretion to charge and who and how they prosecute a case, is an important cog in the wheel of criminal justice reform, but it's also a critical issue in today's climate of racism and racist acts being committed against Black people.

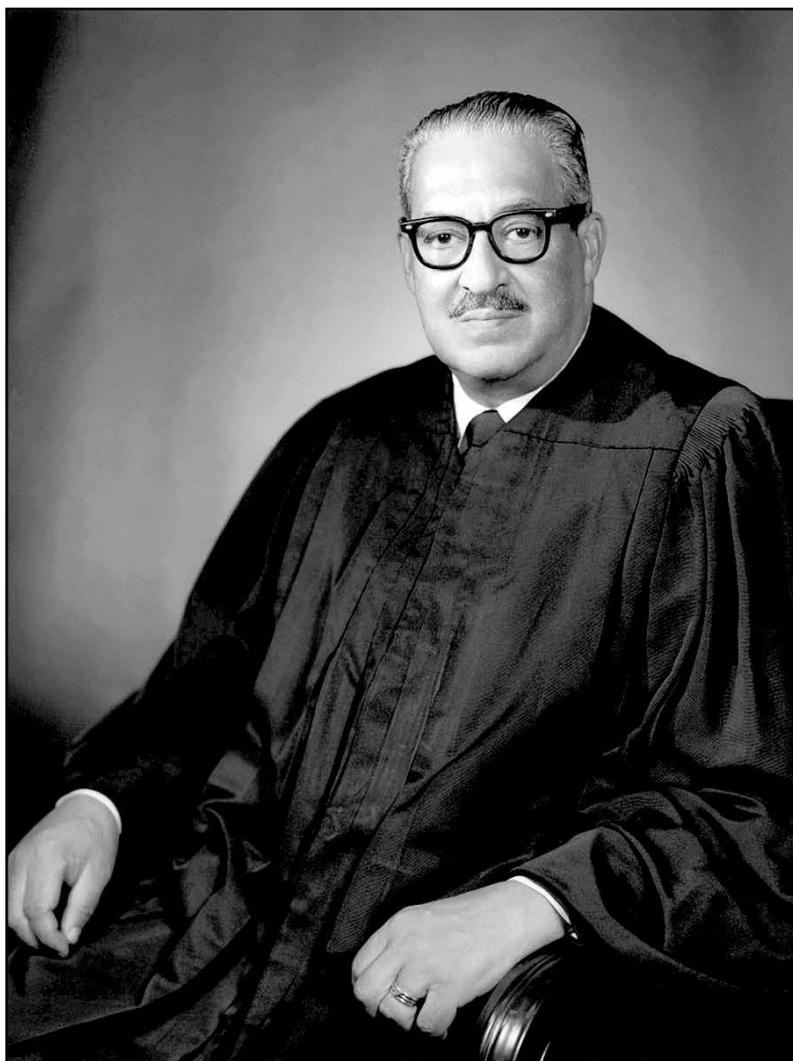
can help to elect more progressive minded prosecutors. Also, to identify and nurture talent and get them to run for these offices and get them elected."

Racism and the Law: Fighting the Obama Backlash

When the country elected Barack Obama as the first African-American President in 2008, there were those who spoke of a post-racial America. This was a far cry from the reality back then and most definitely it is now as you see a backlash by a segment of the population who use race as a fault-line defining their politics.

Something that is closer to the historical reality when you look at America's racial history that has shown when Blacks or minorities gain that the response of some Whites have been nativism, racism, xenophobia that goes as far back as reconstruction, the Civil Rights Movement and now in the post-Obama era. And many of these manifestations of racial animus find its way to the courts changing public policy and, in some instances, placing legal restrictions on African-Americans.

"Part of our legislative agenda is working on the restoration of the Voting Rights Act that was gutted in the Shelby Decision, work with congress to prohibit states from changing voting laws that in our opinion suppress the vote. We are also working on combating voter suppression around the country educating voters about their legal



The Honorable Justice Thurgood Marshall who served as the first Black on the United States Supreme Court, was a member of the National Bar Association.

rights and what they need to know about voting because different states have different laws around voter ID and voter requirements. We want do our job to let voters know what their rights are in different states around the country."

The Legacy of Charles Hamilton Houston: Identifying Today Social Engineers

The challenges America is facing in this age of racial resentment under the current administration

in the nation's capital has become a Clarion Call to resume the fight for justice, equality and fairness. It has stoked the fire renewing and reinvigorating the spirit of past leaders in the legal profession such as; Charles Hamilton Houston, Thurgood Marshall, Charles Ogletree and Leon Higginbotham, moving the race forward. Today the question is who are filling these large shoes in the legal fights many African-Americans face?

Talking about this call to arms and how the National Bar Association is responding Thomas says, "We have many community of lawyers that are part of my generation being born in 1970 just after the 1960's era of Civil Rights. There's Donald Temple in D.C. that is working with young lawyers, making them social engineers. There's Ben Crump, who was the attorney for Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. He is one of our past NBA Presidents. It is important that there are lawyers out here doing this work. And one of my themes for my colleagues this year is we have to be the conscious of the nation because this is a critical time for our country. I believe there is a crisis of conscious, character and competence we are seeing in Washington right now."

The Struggle Continues: NBA Works with Generation Next

The struggle for justice and equality for African-Americans has not been a sprint, but a relay race; where the renewing of the commitment to fight for justice has to be taken on by the next generation. The National Bar Association is dedicated to mentoring young lawyers and exposing young people to consider getting involved in careers in the legal profession.

"We work with our young lawyers' division and we work with our young law students. We have the Crump Law Camp bringing in high school students from around the country for a two-week summer program where we introduce them to the legal profession at Howard University. It is named in honor of our former Executive Director John Crump, who retired in 2009-2010 and that has been one of our signature programs that's reaching out to young people. We at the National Bar Association continue to be dedicated to our mission to serve our community and the legal challenges we face as a people."

Trump Comes Unhinged, Calls Omarosa a “Dog” on Twitter

Data Staff Edited Report

President Donald Trump on Tuesday referred to former White House staffer Omarosa Manigault Newman, the only African-American to have served in a senior role in the White House, as a “dog.”

“When you give a crazed, crying lowlife a break, and give her a job at the White House, I guess it just didn’t work out. Good work by General Kelly for quickly firing that dog!” Trump tweeted Tuesday.

Referring to an African-American woman as an animal is at best a sharp departure from the language typically employed by Presidents and at worst a reference that traffics in sexual and racial imagery. Trump has long denied being racist and has dismissed a claim made by Manigault Newman that he used a racial slur on the set of “The Apprentice.” He’s also invoked “dog”



President Trump’s attacks on Omarosa Manigault Newman came in rapid succession between Sunday and Tuesday, as her tell-all book “Unhinged: An Insider Account of the Trump White House” was released this week, which contains several unflattering claims against the President and his staff.

to insult non-African-Americans – including Mitt Romney and former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon.

As President, however, Trump has stoked racial tensions in the US, blaming “both sides” after violence sparked last year by a neo-Nazi rally

in Charlottesville, Virginia. He also privately referred some African nations as “s***hole countries” and lambasted the protests led overwhelmingly by black NFL players.

The attack stirred an immediate backlash.

“How dare he? How dare he call anyone a dog,” Rep. Frederica Wilson, a Democratic lawmaker and a black woman, said on CNN. “We already have racism raining down all over America.”

“dog,” and the word isn’t limited to women or people of color. In 2012, he commented on actress Kristen Stewart cheating on Robert Pattinson “like a dog.” In 2013, rapper Mac Miller was called an “ungrateful dog.” In 2015, Trump said conservative political commentator Glenn Beck had been “fired like a dog” by Fox News.

And later in 2015, just a couple months out from announcing his presidential campaign, he called media mogul Arianna Huffington a “dog who wrongfully comments on me.”

Trump has drawn criticism in particular for the insults he’s lobbed at women and people of color.

“You’ve called women you don’t like fat pigs, dogs, slob, and disgusting animals,” then-Fox News host Megyn Kelly told Trump at the first GOP candidate debate in 2015.

“Only Rosie O’Donnell,” he retorted.

In a separate tweet Tuesday morning, Trump referred to a crash outside the UK’s Houses of Parliament as a “terrorist attack” committed by “animals,” though the incident was still being investigated and the identity of the driver had not been publicly released.



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Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump
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When you give a crazed, crying lowlife a break, and give her a job at the White House, I guess it just didn’t work out. Good work by General Kelly for quickly firing that dog!

Heather Hurlburt, of the New America think tank, criticized the president.

“I know we’re all supposed to be post-shock now, but the President of the United States calling anybody, and specifically a black woman, a dog cannot be allowed to pass in silence,” she said.

House Speaker Paul Ryan’s office declined to comment.

Trump has been accused in other instances of using racially charged insults. He has repeatedly referred to Rep. Maxine Waters, a black woman, as “low IQ.” In announcing his presidential bid in 2015, he called Mexican immigrants “rapists” and “criminals.”

It’s far from the first time the president has called someone a

The President also has been accused of calling some women “fat pigs” and “dogs,” though Trump has defended his treatment of women and denied multiple sexual misconduct claims against him.

Manigault Newman was fired from her job as director of communications for the Office of Public Liaison by Trump’s chief of staff John Kelly last December.

Trump’s attacks on Manigault Newman come as her tell-all book “Unhinged: An Insider Account of the Trump White House” is released this week, which contains several unflattering claims against the President and his staff. White House press secretary Sarah Sanders has said the book is “riddled with lies and false accusations.”

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BlacKkKlansman Review

Spike Lee Delivers a Knockout Punch

Data Staff Reports

From visionary filmmaker Spike Lee comes the incredible true story of an American hero. It's the early 1970s, and Ron Stallworth (John David Washington) is the first African-American detective to serve in the Colorado Springs Police Department. Determined to make a name for himself, Stallworth bravely sets out on a dangerous mission: infiltrate and expose the Ku Klux Klan. The young detective soon recruits a more seasoned colleague, Flip Zimmerman (Adam Driver), into the undercover investigation of a lifetime. Together, they team up to take down the extremist hate group as the organization aims to sanitize its violent rhetoric to appeal to the mainstream. Produced by the team behind the Academy-Award® winning *Get Out*.

BlacKkKlansman is right up there with *Do the Right Thing* and *Malcolm X* in the Spike's Joint pantheon of game-changers. For starters, it gets your blood up about the toxic and enduring power of racism. Based on the true story of Ron Stallworth (John David Washington), the first African-American cop on the Colorado Springs police force, the film shows how Ron managed to infiltrate the Ku Klux Klan and righteously screw with it from the inside. The time is the 1970s, but the filmmaker is not content with dusting off the past. His incendiary movie uses the alt-right cry of "America first!" to rocket his film into the festering, racist race hatred of the Trump era.

Lee is too much the hellraising stylist to stay inside a documentary box. Starting with a clip from the 1939 Civil War epic *Gone With the Wind* — the camera rising to meet and then salute a Confed-



erate flag — *BlacKkKlansman* moves on to Alec Baldwin's white supremacist, fulminating in a newsreel about a "mongrel nation" generated by "Jewish puppets on the Supreme Court." Later, we get scenes from D.W. Griffith's 1915 silent epic, *The Birth of a Nation*, which prodded audiences to applaud KKK lynchings of blacks. As Lee sees it, the Hollywood propaganda machine has a hell of a lot to answer for.

Stallworth bristles when police chief Bridges (Robert John Burke) sticks him in the records department, where this Afro-wearing rookie is the target of racial insults. His first chance to go undercover comes when he's assigned to wear a wire and report on a Black Student Union event in which Black Panther ex-leader Stokely Carmichael (Straight

Outta Compton's Corey Hawkins), a.k.a. Kwame Ture, fires up the crowd. Stallworth flirts with Patrice (Laura Harrier), the BSU president who doesn't know he is one of the pigs she hates on. His arguments that then-current films such as *Shaft* and *Cleopatra Jones* show a good side of blacks in law enforcement are dismissed by Patrice as a "blaxploitation fantasy."

To prove himself, Ron answers a Klan recruitment ad, phoning in and using his "white voice." For in-person meetings, Jewish cop Flip Zimmerman (Adam Driver) subs in. Their teamwork is the heart of the film — and both actors knock it out of the park. Washington, son of Denzel, is hilarious on the phone with KKK Imperial Wizard David Duke (a sensational Topher Grace, personify-

ing the banality of evil). As Ron butters up Duke with bigotry, other cops listen in and laugh. Washington, quietly devastating, conveys the character's gnawing isolation. And Driver is beyond brilliant as a cop going undercover among haters such as Klansman Felix (Jasper Pääkkönen), who denies the Holocaust. Flip takes a huge risk and disagrees. "Why would you deny it? It was beautiful," he lies, savoring the word on his tongue and chilling the blood in the process. His performance as a man caught in a poisonous game of pretend is stunning.

BlacKkKlansman, adapted by Lee, David Rabinowitz, Charlie Wachtel and Kevin Willmott from Stallworth's book, demands the best from everyone, including cinematographer Chayse Irvin, editor Barry Alexander Brown and composer Terence Blanchard. (Having *Get Out* provocateur Jordan Peele on the producing team doesn't hurt, either.) Still, the movie breathes Lee as he walks a tightrope over the heroic best and craven worst of humanity. The eruptive violence of the film's climax, with Ron and Flip caught in the crosshairs of a Klan hit on the BSU, is nerve-shattering. Some might argue that the movie didn't need a present-day coda of the showdown between white nationalists and protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia; the notorious Trump speech claiming there was "blame on both sides"; or the still-active hatemonger Duke praising the President's comments. There are times when Lee wobbles, veering into caricature and simplification. But none of this distracts from the fact that this hot-damn triumph — one of the year's best films — is the impassioned work of a cinema giant who has again found his voice and the power to make it heard.

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Style & Energy

5 Ways To Push Yourself to Do Absolutely Nothing



Samjah Iman



Data News Weekly introduces a new column by New Orleans' fashion and lifestyle blogger Samjah Iman. We welcome her to Data News Weekly and encourage you to follow her on her blog styleandenergy.com.

By Samjah Iman
Data News Weekly Fashion & Lifestyle Contributor

I know you read the title and was like, "huh".....but let me tell you, this here is serious business. Doing absolutely nothing is an art that has been mastered by very few people. It takes willpower to be a bum for a few hours. I personally know this because whenever I get some free time, I have to talk myself into doing nothing, and then I find myself feeling guilty sometimes when I bum out. But not anymore!

We live in a time where messages like "hustle everyday," "no time off," "no sleep," or "sleep when I die" are constantly being planted in our psyche. And my response to those messages is an elegant middle finger gesture. Taking the time to rest our bodies and brains is imperative. When we do so we preserve ourselves, we feel more energized, and are more productive when it is time to grind. Currently I've been using my free time wisely, and I must say I'm getting good at doing diddly-squat.

productive because society wants us to believe that we are always supposed to be on the go. Get that out of your heads and remember this is your life. You run your race at your own pace....and in order to run the race, you must rest.

2. Get your work done - I'm the type of person that likes to have everything done before I sit down....this way my list of "things to do" won't be on my mind while I am trying to rest. Go hard during the week so that you can take a day on the weekend and do nothing. Let "doing nothing" be your reward for a productive week.

3. Pick a designated "me time" - Everyone in my circle knows when I am about to hibernate. I call my loved ones to let them know I'm entering "Sam's world" and I'm about to shut my ringer off. Pick out a time that you want to just do nothing and call those who usually ring your phone and let them know to take their crap elsewhere for the next hour or so....of course this excludes emergencies.

4. Get in the bed earlier - If I've had a long day with no personal time, I try to at least get in the bed earlier than my usual sleep time so that I can chill out and do nothing. If I can't make myself sit on the couch for a few hours, surely I can make myself sit in the bed and do nothing before falling asleep.

5. Just do it - If all of the above fails, then just simply sit your butt down and do nothing! You owe it to yourself! The world will keep spinning if you don't cut the yard on a particular day, run that lap when you said you would, write that report, or wash those dishes. Time is of the essence, and I wholeheartedly believe that we should do what we have to do to survive, but we should also do what we want to do as well.

Bum out my friends, you deserve it.

- Samjah Iman



If you want to join in on this movement, check out *5 Ways to Push Yourself to Do Absolutely Nothing* below.

1. Get it in your mind that you deserve some time to just do nothing - Often times we feel guilty when it comes to being un-

New Orleans blogger Samah Iman, is a flower child, style enthusiast, journalist, and aspiring morning person. She created her blog to document her life experiences in hopes of inspiring someone and to demonstrate how simple outfits can stand out when accompanied with a pleasant aura and the right amount of confidence. Being true to yourself and your style is paramount. Samjah wants her readers to know that they don't have to be extravagant to look good; it's all about individuality, attitude and spirit. You can follow Samjah Iman at styleandenergy.com or email her, samjahiman@styleandenergy.com

Getting Real about High School Graduation for Black and Brown Students

By Nate Davis
CEO and Board of Directors
Chairman, K12 Inc.

Our nation's graduation rate is at an all-time high. The national figure shows 84 percent of young people, overall, graduating from high school within four years after first entering the 9th grade, a trend that has been on a consistent upswing since the 2010-2011 school year.

Still, despite much progress with that indicator, major gaps still exist. And there is great concern that the graduation rate hype not only masks those gaps, but distracts us from what must be our ultimate goal: ensuring all students earn a high school diploma and are college and career ready.

Even as overall graduation rates improve, Black and Hispanic students continue to lag behind that curve. Graduation rates for African American students are 76.4 percent-



Nate Davis, the CEO and Chairman of the Board of Directors at K12 Inc. (not pictured), says that graduating students is meaningless, if they are not prepared for college and careers. (Pixabay.com)

age points—8 percentage points behind the national average—and Latino students are at 79.3 percent. Native American students fare even worse at just 72 percent graduation. Meanwhile, White and Asian

students are anywhere from four to six points higher than the national average.

None of us can reasonably expect the closure of inequality gaps, if we're simply satisfied with overall graduation rates while resigned to stubborn achievement gaps. Yet, it seems as if we're in a phase whereby these disparities are being treated as normal—"the way it is"—as opposed to addressing a larger parity problem.

We have to ask ourselves: are we having a responsible and responsive conversation about high school graduation?

The most recent "Building a Grad Nation" report from America's Promise Alliance says that, "Twenty-three states have Black-White graduation rate gaps larger than the national average, including five states—Wisconsin, Nevada, Minnesota, New York, and Ohio—where the gap is more than 20 per-

centage points...Twenty-four states have Hispanic/White graduation rate gaps that exceed the national average, and in two states – Minnesota and New York—the gap is more than 20 percentage points."

The persistent normalcy of lower achievement among certain disadvantaged student populations is deeply troubling. Closing those gaps should be as important—if not more—than simply raising overall graduation rates.

At the same time, graduation rates can be used to unfairly malign schools that are serving underprivileged youth and, in fact, helping at-risk students earn a high school diploma. Alternative schools are singled out for having four-year cohort graduation rates that are generally lower than the national average, but left out of the conversation is how these schools are intention-

Commentary, Continued on page 10.

Justice Served

McCulloch Out, Bell in as St. Louis County Prosecutor



Julianne Malveaux
NNPA Columnist

Just over four years ago, on August 9, 2014, 18-year-old Michael Brown was murdered by Police Officer Darren Wilson. He was shot six times, and might have survived some of the shots, but was fatally wounded when he was shot in the head. Wilson claimed he shot in self-defense, but Michael Brown was unarmed. St. Louis County Prosecutor Bob McCulloch took his time convening a grand jury and announced in November 2014, three months after Brown's murder, that the grand jury voted not to indict Wilson.

Critics say that McCulloch manipulated the grand jury process to protect Darren Wilson, but now he has his comeuppance. The 27-year prosecutor was defeated by Wesley Bell, an African American attorney and member of the Ferguson City Council. Bell seems quite the opposite of the racially-biased McCulloch, a prosecutor who incarcerated poor African Americans for minor offenses. McCulloch and the Ferguson police department were cited by the Department of Justice for unfair practices and for using substantial traffic fines as revenue generators for the city. Had Wesley Bell been County Prosecutor, it is likely that Darren Wilson would have been held accountable in the murder of Michael Brown.

Wesley Bell was endorsed by the Real Justice PAC, an exciting new political action committee whose purpose is to "elect prosecutors who will fix our broken criminal justice system." It's a great approach given that "prosecutorial discretion" often determines who will be charged,

and for what offenses. Prosecutors are the ones who decide whether to charge someone with a crime or convene a grand jury. They also choose how much bail to ask for, often pressuring indigent defendants into plea deals or holding them in jail for long periods of time if they cannot post bond.

The Real Justice PAC website lists nine endorsements for this election cycle. Two, Wesley Bell and Contra Costa District Attorney Diana Becton, won their elections. Two, Boston attorney Rachel Rollins and San Antonio's Joe Gonzales, face elections later this year. The other five lost their races, but were able to make essential points about criminal justice reform during their elections. Their opponents were all incumbents who will, perhaps, be motivated by their challengers to make changes in the ways they administer the law. This bottom-up approach to criminal justice reform, focusing on prosecutors who have a fair approach to "law and order," is a logical outgrowth of the Black

Lives Matter protests that have followed police killings of Black men and women. The legacy of the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown have been a focus on police accountability. After Brown was killed, President Obama made \$75 million available for local police departments to purchase body cameras, increasing police accountability in some instances (although some officers conveniently do not wear their cameras).

Having lost the Democratic primary for St. Louis County Prosecutor, Bob McCulloch still has a few months left to serve in his term. Hopefully, he will be chastened enough by his loss to curtail his oppressive manner of enforcing the law. Indeed, activists will need to pay attention to these last days of McCulloch's reign. While he has the potential to continue to damage the lives of many individuals, his loss is sweet revenge. Wesley Bell, who has no Republican opponent for November's race, has the opportunity to model what criminal

justice can look like when a progressive leader is making prosecution decisions.

Perhaps Wesley Bell's win will encourage the Real Justice PAC to seek out candidates in other cities—their work, so far, has focused on California, Texas, and the St. Louis race. People of color in many urban areas, however, face injustice when biased prosecutors act on their biases with their "prosecutorial discretion." Police officers, too, use their prejudices to decide when to charge and when not to. Unconscious bias is a benign word for racism, and it is rife in the criminal justice system. Electing better prosecutors is a first step toward reversing some of this, so I applaud the work of the Real Justice PAC. But there is so much more that must be done before we experience equal justice.

Julianne Malveaux is an author, economist and founder of Economic Education. Her latest book "Are We Better Off? Race, Obama and Public Policy" is available to order at Amazon.com and at www.julianmalveaux.com. Follow Dr. Malveaux on Twitter @drjlastword.

JUUL Labs Offers New Device to Help Smokers Monitor, Change their Habits

Company also Launches Education Efforts to Combat Underage Use

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Contributor

Kevin Burns, the CEO of the e-cigarette technology firm JUUL Labs, said his company is dedicated to eliminating traditional cigarette smoking by offering existing adult smokers a real alternative to combustible cigarettes.

The JUUL device uses an intelligent heating mechanism that creates an aerosol and is engineered to minimize combustion, according to the company's website.

Burns, who formally served as president and COO of the Greek yogurt brand Chobani, told the NNPA Newswire that JUUL remains focused on improving the lives of the more than 38 million adults who smoke in America and the one billion-plus who indulge in cigarette use around the globe.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black adults smoke cigarettes at roughly the same rate as White adults (16.5 percent for non-Hispanic Blacks vs. 16.6 percent of non-Hispanic Whites).

"This is a product focused on the adult smoker and we want to eliminate smoke around the world and give the smoker the nicotine experience with the switch to e-cigarettes" said Burns, who holds a bachelor of science degree from the University of Connecticut and an MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

The JUUL is a slim device that looks like a flash drive. The company, which reportedly has an estimated worth of \$16 billion, also manufactures e-liquid "JUUL-pods" that contain nicotine salts, which Burns said result in nicotine delivery that users find as satisfying as what they get from traditional cigarettes. The liquid pods contain benzoic acid, a naturally occurring ingredient that, when combined with nicotine, helps in mimicking the peak nicotine delivery of a cigarette.

A single JUULpod contains five percent nicotine; a three percent nicotine pod will be more widely available this month, Burns said.

"We hope the availability of dif-



The JUUL e-cigarette is a slim device that looks like a flash drive. E-cigarettes have the potential to benefit adult smokers who are not pregnant if used as a complete substitute for regular cigarettes and other smoked tobacco products, according to the CDC. (JUUL)

ferent nicotine strengths will continue to allow adult smokers the ability to explore what's best for them," Burns said.

That's important for African Americans, Hispanics, lower-income individuals and many military veterans, all who tend to use nicotine products, he said.

"We think we can bring a solution that can have an incredible impact on people switching from combustible tobacco products [to e-cigarettes]," Burns said.

The company has created educational materials to support underserved communities and they continue to encourage the use of their products by adults only, Burns said.

"Our intent is not to have people who aren't using nicotine products to [purchase our products]," Burns said. "We don't want non-users and we don't want underage users."

JUUL Labs has spared little expense in its educational efforts.

In the United States, youth are more likely than adults to use e-cigarettes, according to the CDC, which makes those education efforts even more critical, as the company expands into new markets.

JUUL Labs established an ad-

visory council for community outreach and youth education awareness and prevention in Baltimore, Md. It's the first city in which JUUL is attempting a hands-on approach, aligning with partners like the Black Mental Health Alliance and Baltimore Corps., an organization that enlists talented individuals in public service and social entrepreneurship in Baltimore.

When asked how does JUUL

plan to market its products to African Americans and Hispanics, Burns said the company is evaluating options.

"We're formulating a plan now. We have a partnership with Black Mental Health Alliance... doing community work and we're working on the population that's underserved and overharmed," Burns said.

The company is also making ef-

forts in terms of retail auditing to make sure people are not selling their products to underage youth, Burns said.

The company takes underage smoking very seriously and, to that end, they're also establishing the use of Bluetooth technology which could one day shut devices down around schools and other places, Burns said.

JUUL is also developing a Bluetooth-enabled device in international markets that consumers can link to health and wellness apps on their smartphones.

"We are looking at the ability to allow them to reduce their dependence," Burns said. "Connection to the app may have features that allow you to monitor and have active management of your device, which can actively manage nicotine levels; getting people off of [combustible] cigarettes is a big win."

Burns concluded: "With the hardware and software, we'll be able to give people every opportunity to minimize their relationship with nicotine. This will be done through a very sophisticated technology where we will have a device connected to an app that will allow you to have active management of your use."

Learn more about the vapor alternative to traditional cigarettes at JUUL.com.

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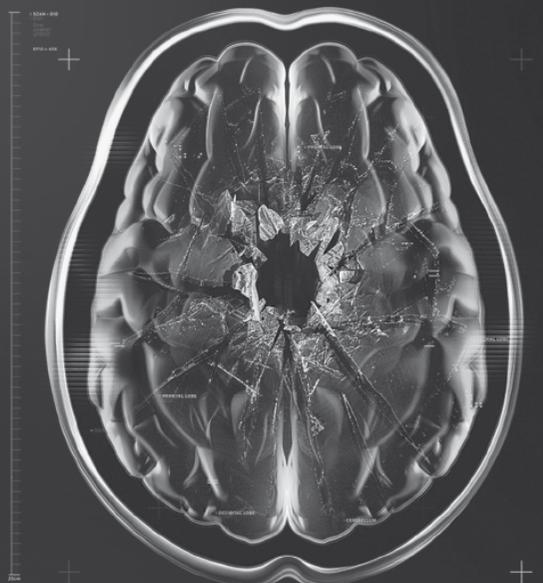
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Commentary, Continued from page 8.

ally designed to serve credit-deficient transfer students and former dropouts at risk of never earning a diploma at all.

Measuring how well schools are graduating students is important, but it should be done right, and must not create disincentives for schools to serve credit-deficient students or dropouts looking for a second chance. After all, what is more important for these students: graduating or graduating “on-time”? It’s why graduation rate calculations should be reformed altogether so schools are held accountable for students’ annual progress toward graduation ev-

ery year, not just in the fourth year of high school.

Sadly, the drive to meet on-time graduation has led to recent cases of manipulation and fraud, which, of course, is wrong, but it also misses the primary purposes of high school altogether: preparing students for higher education, careers, and the workforce. The linkage between these goals—graduation and college and career readiness—is crucial for broader national competitiveness. Graduating students is meaningless if they are not prepared.

The number of high school students heading into remedial courses in their first year of college are staggering, and the gaps between varying demographics

are even more troubling. Nearly 60 percent of African American students are forced to enroll in non-credit remedial classes in college, according to the Center for American Progress, compared to 45 percent of Latino students and 35 percent of White students. This means that Black, first-year college students, already burdened the most by rising college costs and loan debt, are taking on a greater share of the \$1.3 billion wasted on non-credit remedial courses.

There is no one silver bullet that will solve our nation’s graduation problem, but we can start by realigning graduation standards to the expectations of colleges, career training programs, indus-

tries and jobs, and developing competency-based, personalized learning paths for students unconstrained by four-year cohorts. And we must finally address funding gaps that exist for too many alternative schools working to eliminate achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

Addressing this complex challenge requires a mix of other solutions, too; improved learning models and instruction, greater support for our teachers, innovative technology, and increased services to disenfranchised students groups are just a few that we should be working on. But none of this can happen without educators, policymakers and

business leaders willing to engage in honest and constructive conversations, and then pledging to act.

A rising graduation rate is worth celebrating, but let’s not become complacent.

Learn more about improving the educational outcomes for the students in your life at npa.org/essa.

Nate Davis is the Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board of Directors at K12 Inc., an online education provider for students in pre-K through 12th grade.

Nate Davis, the CEO and Chairman of the Board of Directors at K12 Inc. (not pictured), says that graduating students is meaningless, if they are not prepared for college and careers. (Pixabay.com)



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Obama Announces Major Midterm Endorsements

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Contributor

Former President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama were recently caught on video dancing at a Beyoncé and Jay-Z concert in Landover, Md.

Now, the Obama's are back to business, announcing that they've endorsed dozens of candidates in advance of November's all-important mid-term elections.

This large, diverse contingent comprises 81 candidates from across the country in federal, state and down-ballot races.

"I'm proud to endorse such a wide and impressive array of Democratic candidates—leaders as diverse, patriotic, and big-hearted as the America they're running to represent," Obama said in a statement. "I'm confident that, together, they'll strengthen this country we love by restoring opportunity that's broadly shared, repairing our alliances and standing in the world, and upholding our fundamental commitment to justice, fairness, responsibility, and the rule of law."

Obama continued: "But first, they need our votes—and I'm eager to make the case for why Democratic candidates deserve our votes this fall."

Obama said he and his wife believe the country's long-term challenges can be addressed best when all Americans take a more active role in democracy. That's why he is dedicating his post-Presidency efforts to identifying and elevating the next generation of leaders, he said.

In issuing this first round of endorsements, Obama said he also hopes to help current and aspiring Democratic leaders establish themselves, build their profiles, and lead their communities.

This fall, Obama promises to prioritize supporting redistricting targets recommended by the National Democratic Redistricting Committee (NDRC), taking back control of the U.S. House of Representatives, and growing the U.S. Senate Democratic Caucus.

The round of endorsements also includes several promising Obama Administration and campaign alumni who heeded the former president's call in his farewell speech to "grab a clipboard, get some signatures, and run for office yourself," Obama said.



Former President Barack Obama has issued a wave of endorsements ahead of the midterm elections. In this photo, President Barack Obama delivers the 2011 State of the Union Address while standing in front of President of the Senate Joe Biden and Speaker of the House John Boehner. (Pete Souza/Wikimedia Commons)

Both Barack Obama and Michelle Obama said they expect to campaign in several states this fall and to issue a second round of endorsements in advance of November 6.

Here's a list of endorsements issued by the Obamas:

California

Gavin Newsom (Governor)
Eleni Kounalakis (Lt. Governor)
Josh Harder (U.S. House, CA-10)
TJ Cox (U.S. House, CA-21)
Katie Hill (U.S. House, CA-25)
Katie Porter (U.S. House, CA-45)
Harley Rouda (U.S. House, CA-48)
Mike Levin (U.S. House, CA-49)
Ammar Campa-Najjar (U.S. House, CA-50)
Buffy Wicks (State Assembly, District 15)

Colorado

Jared Polis (Governor)
Dianne Primavera (Lt. Governor)
Phil Weiser (Attorney General)
Jena Griswold (Secretary of State)
Tammy Story (State Senate, District 16)
Jessie Danielson (State Senate, District 20)
Brittany Pettersen (State Senate, District 22)
Faith Winter (State Senate, District 24)
Dylan Roberts (State House, District 26)
Dafna Michaelson Jenet (State House, District 30)
Shannon Bird (State House, District 35)
Rochelle Galindo (State House, District 50)
Julie McCluskie (State House, District 61)

Georgia

Stacey Abrams (Governor)
Sarah Riggs Amico (Lt. Governor)
Matthew Wilson (State House, District 80)
Shelly Hutchinson (State House, District 107)

Illinois

J.B. Pritzker (Governor)
Juliana Stratton (Lt. Governor)
Kwame Raoul (Attorney General)
Sean Casten (U.S. House, IL-6)
Brendan Kelly (U.S. House, IL-12)
Lauren Underwood (U.S. House, IL-14)

Iowa

Deidre DeJean (Secretary of State)
Tim Gannon (Secretary of Agriculture)
Kristin Sunde (State House, District 42)
Jennifer Konfrst (State House, District 43)
Eric Gjerde (State House, District 67)
Laura Liegois (State House, District 91)

Maine

Louis Luchini (State Senate, District 7)
Laura Fortman (State Senate, District 13)
Linda Sanborn (State Senate, District 30)

Nevada

Jacky Rosen (U.S. Senate)
Susie Lee (U.S. House, NV-3)
Steven Horsford (U.S. House, NV-4)

New Jersey

Andy Kim (U.S. House, NJ-3)
Tom Malinowski (U.S. House, NJ-7)

New Mexico

Debra Haaland (U.S. House, NM-1)
Daymon Ely (State House, District 23)
Natalie Figueroa (State House, District 30)

New York

Antonio Delgado (U.S. House, NY-19)
Anna Kaplan (State Senate, District 7)

North Carolina

Wiley Nickel (State Senate, District 16)
Ron Wesson (State House, District 1)
Terence Everitt (State House, District 35)
Julie Von Haefen (State House, District 36)
Sydney Batch (State House, District 37)
Rachel Hunt (State House, District 103)

Ohio

Richard Cordray (Governor)
Betty Sutton (Lt. Governor)
Steve Dettelbach (Attorney General)
Kathleen Clyde (Secretary of State)
Zack Space (Auditor)
Aftab Pureval (U.S. House, OH-1)
Jill Schiller (U.S. House, OH-2)
Phil Robinson (State House, District 6)
Stephanie Howse (State House, District 11)
Mary Lightbody (State House, District 19)
Beth Liston (State House, District 21)
Allison Russo (State House, District 24)
Erica Crawley (State House, District 26)
Tavia Galonski (State House, District 35)
Casey Weinstein (State House, District 37)
Taylor Sappington (State House, District 94)

Pennsylvania

Madeleine Dean (U.S. House, PA-4)
Susan Wild (U.S. House, PA-7)
Tina Davis (State Senate, District 6)
Liz Hanbidge (State House, District 61)
Carolyn Comitta (State House, District 156)

Texas

Adrienne Bell (U.S. House, TX-14)
Colin Allred (U.S. House, TX-32)

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Stacy is a frequent contributor to the NNPA Newswire and BlackPressUSA.com. You can also find Stacy's work in *The Washington Informer*, *Baltimore Times*, *Philadelphia Tribune*, *Pocono Record*, and the *New York Post*. Stacy is the co-author of "Blind Faith: The Miraculous Journey of Lula Hardaway, Stevie Wonder's Mother." Follow Stacy on Twitter @stacy-brownmedia.

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