

JUNETEENTH

M A G A Z I N E

Central Valley & Fresno

A Legacy of Freedom, Education, Economics, Community

THE



PROJECT

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November/December- 2024 Volume 1.1



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Greetings to you Leaders,

We created this magazine in the spirit of coalescing and communication for a consensus lead community. While building strong collaborations, our aim is to talk to engage leaders of our cities and as we promote the long and rich Legacy of African American contributions in the Central Valley. As a function of the AACC African American Community Council we are guided by 6 pillars; Education, Economics, Health, Governance, Housing, & Ministries.

info@centralvalleyjuneteenth.com

JUNETEENTH

Why it is so important for our youth



by: Christian Flemming

Embrace a Legacy of Freedom, Progress, and Community as we celebrate Juneteenth. It's essential to reflect on the powerful journey that began between 1863 and 1865—a pivotal time in American history that continues to shape the lives of young Black men and women today.

This celebration is not just about looking back, but also about appreciating the progress we've made and using that knowledge to inspire our future.

The Journey of Freedom:

1863-1865, It all began with the Emancipation Proclamation, signed by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, which

declared enslaved people in the Confederate states to be free. But real freedom didn't come until June 19, 1865—two and a half years later—when Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas to enforce the proclamation. This day, now celebrated as Juneteenth, marks the true end of slavery in the United States.

Juneteenth reminds us that freedom, though delayed, cannot be denied. It's a testament to the resilience and strength of our ancestors, who fought for their freedom and for the future of their children. That same resilience is within us today, as we continue to evolve.

Inspiration for the Youth:

Building on Our Legacy for young African Americans, Juneteenth is a reminder of where we've come from and how much potential we have to keep advancing forward. Black folks/African Americans fought hard for their freedom, and they passed down a legacy of strength, innovation, and progress. They laid the foundation, and now

see JUNETEENTH on page 2



by: Wes Flowers

POETRY

The Key Ingredients to Unity

Each and everyday
We have the opportunity
To give each other love and sensitivity
I am speaking to the minds
Of my brotha's and sistas'
About the facts of oppression's reality
Something devouring
To the minds of our people
If we don't take heed
Of our responsibility
Listen to the message consciously
And we will make a step towards unity
Each one must reach one
And feel as though
They have souls of superiority
We are from a rich land of royalty
And re-living life as Kings and Queens
Must be in our destiny
Because a nation of people
All under the same beliefs
Are the Key Ingredients to Unity



UNITY

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THE LEGACY PROJECT

SOUTHWEST FRESNO'S AFRICAN AMERICAN RENAISSANCE DRIVE

by: Christian Flemming

The contributions of African American leaders, educators, and entrepreneurs in Southwest Fresno are a source of pride for all of us. Dr. James E. Aldredge believes “we must continue to honor that legacy by staying involved in our community, advocating for positive change, and lifting up those around us.”

The Path Forward:

We cannot afford to forget our current legacy. Hank Hendrix, a Legacy Project co-founder with Dr. Aldredge says “what African American folks have built and accomplished in Southwest Fresno deserves to be preserved, protected, and celebrated”. From the grassroots movements that led to positive changes in housing and education, to the civic involvement that continues to push for equity, we must ensure that future generations understand the significance of these contributions.

Young people have a vital role to play in continuing this legacy. The work done by those before us is not in vain,

and it's now up to us to keep that torch burning.

Our history is not only one of struggle—it's one of triumph, community, and resilience. Let this be a call to action for all young African Americans: preserve our legacy, honor our past, and take pride in the progress we are making today. We must continue to build on the achievements of those who came before us, ensuring that future generations have even more opportunities to succeed. ■

Please see the Legacy Map on Page 12-13





ECONOMICS

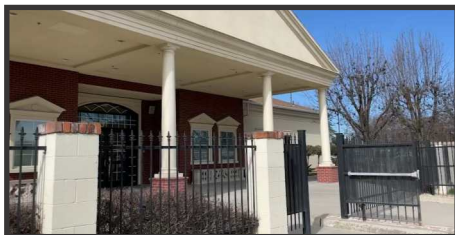
Fresno's Oldest African American Owned Business

Jesse E. Cooley Jr. Funeral Home

This family-owned business is the oldest African-American owned and operated business in Fresno. The Cooley family entered into the funeral industry under the leadership of Jesse E. Cooley, Sr., who studied mortuary science in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1925. He opened the mortuary in 1928 in Brookhaven, Mississippi.

Mr. Cooley, Sr. married the Beatrice Gray, and moved to Fresno in 1939, where he started the groundwork and officially opened "Valley Funeral Home" in 1941, making it the first Black-owned mortuary in the San Joaquin Valley.

Jesse E. Cooley, Jr. having been trained under his father, teamed up with Andrew Riolo in 1953, when they opened the first Black-owned mortuary in Solano County, CA- "Cooley-Riolo Funeral Home". In 1956, Jesse Jr., returned home to Fresno, receiving the reins from his father, he began to operate and oversee the mortuary under the new



name of "Jesse E. Cooley, Jr. Funeral Home."

In 1959, with the assistance of his father, Jesse Sr., he opened the second branch of the funeral home in Bakersfield, CA. In 1971 a third branch was opened in Stockton, CA. The hardworking Jesse Jr. and wife Barbara Taylor Cooley eventually established new locations in Bakersfield and Stockton as well as the Community Chapel on Tulare and Waterman streets in Fresno. The new Fresno facility at 1830 S. Fruit street, is a state of the art facility that is now complete and open for business.

Jesse E. Cooley, Jr. Funeral Service held an "Open House" on Sunday, February 10, 2008 for its new facility. Residents throughout the city attended the event which showcased the new facility which replaced the old funeral home that was destroyed by fire in 2004. ■

source: website, AACC Historians, & the Internet

LEGACY

EDUCATION/SOCIAL

Dorothy “Dottie” Smith

As the first Black woman to be elected as a Trustee to the State Center Community College District (SCCCD) Board, she has been an essential piece of Fresno.

Dottie Smith served on the board for 33 years, from 1981-2015, longer than anyone else to date. Approximately 1.7 million people and 38 unified and high school districts are served by the SCCC Board in more than 5,743 square miles of urban and rural territory. This includes most of Fresno and Madera counties and portions of Kings and Tulare counties.

As a college student, she was one of the youngest people in California to be elected to serve on an elementary school board. She was recognized on the state and national levels for initiating the first K - 12 Community College Summit to bridge the gap between the community college and the K -12 Districts. Smith was one of the 100 former students of Fresno City College recognized during the 100th year celebration.



Other highlights and recognitions include: given a key to the City of Fresno by former Fresno Mayor, Karen Humphrey and recipient of a Black History Month Recognition by former Assemblyman Juan Arambula, serving as the 2015-2016 President of the Fresno County Democratic Women's Club, appointed delegate of the 23rd assembly district, former board member of Planned Parenthood, the Marjorie Mason Center, and Channel 18. Smith is also former president of the National Council of Negro Women. ■

LEGACY

EDUCATION/SOCIAL

Mac Foster

Today “The Legacy Project” presents to you the Legendary Mac Arthur Foster. Mac was named after General McArthur by his father who joined the Army Air Corps at the request of the general requesting Black Soldiers. After his father joined the military Mac was born off-base in Alexandria, Louisiana in 1942 weighing in at a whopping 13 pounds at birth. Mac was the fourth born child outta 14 siblings all together.

Mac became a Fresnan after his dad was transferred to Hammerfield Air Corps Base in 1944 located in Fresno, California. Mac attended Orange Center from kindergarten to the eighth grade and then graduated from Washington Union High School in 1960.

Mac was an outstanding athlete in high school where he played football and participated on the track team as a shot putter and a discus thrower. His athletic prowess garnered the attention of Fresno State; who offered him a track and field scholarship. However, the United States Marine Corps was looking for a few good men and Mac volunteered his services.

As a Vietnam Vet, Mac was a very decorated soldier and accomplished the following: Graduate of guerrilla



war training. Became a Sergeant during an active war. Served as a Military Police. Participated in 14 successful combat missions in the Vietnam War. Won the All Marine Corps Championship as a Light heavyweight. Won the All Service Championship as a Heavyweight. Received an invitation to participate in 1964 Olympic Trials, but volunteered for another tour in the Vietnam War instead.

After a very honorable discharge Mac became a professional boxer in 1966. Upon becoming a an expert pugilist Mac won his first 24 fights all by knockouts winning the most consecutive knockout record for American Heavyweights. By 1970 Mac put Fresno on the map by

see **MAC FOSTER** on pg. 14

LEGACY

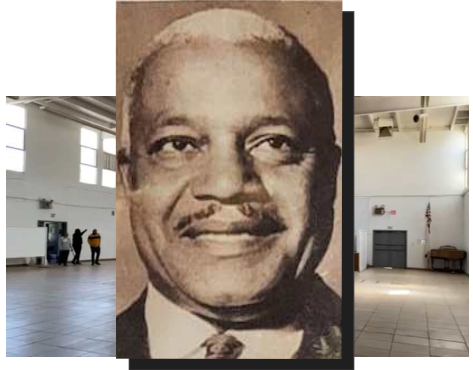
EDUCATION/SOCIAL

Cecil C. Hinton

A native of Tennessee, Cecil Clarence Hinton settled in Fresno, California in 1944 as a USO Center Director. Upon marrying Martha Galliard they had one daughter, Lois Juanita. Having started a family in Fresno, Mr. Hinton felt that a place that addresses opportunity and the needs of a community of color was apparent.

Mr. Hinton became instrumental in the creation of the B Street Community Center and served 19 years as Director. The center served 48 youth groups and 53 adult groups under his direction. Various social and recreational programs that addressed the lack of opportunity were provided to community. Due to his concerted efforts and professional guidance, in 1968 the center was renamed the Cecil C. Hinton Center in his honor.

A graduate of Howard University and an undergraduate of Columbia University, Mr. Hinton was an anomaly of the norm during a tumultuous time in our country. He was antithetical of the stereotype of his demographic, and educated African American with an insatiable appetite for community



advancement and the intellectual capacity to implement and influence. he was honored by numerous prestigious organizations and government groups for his community involvement and work. The California State Senate honored him with a resolution of appreciation as well as being honored in both 1980 and 1985 as “Fabulous Fresnan” by California State University, Fresno Black Gospel Choir.

Mr. Hinton's membership in the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, the California Association of Settlements and neighborhoods as well as national conference of social welfare are all testaments of his love of community and his commitment to implementing change and action. Mr. Hinton received a Certificate of Special Recognition as a Trailblazer/Pioneer in addition to many other accolades for his untiring work for the community. ■

SPOTLIGHT ON **wellness**

Gidai Maaza is a Fresno-based mental health professional with an emphasis on counseling elementary aged children, adolescents, and late adolescents.

Gidai strives to bring an effective blend of experience, clarity, empathy and action to the counseling process in order to achieve beneficial outcomes and provide authentic healing and wholeness to individuals, families, and communities. He earned an Associate degree from Fresno City College, Bachelors of Arts in Liberal Studies with an emphasis on Psychology from Fresno Pacific University, and Masters of Science in Counseling from University of Phoenix.

Gidai has over 13 years of experience in counseling with a wide range of clients in a variety of treatment settings. These include providing counseling under various non-profit agencies serving prenatal to young adult mental health, addiction work with the Salvation Army Fresno, clients diagnosed w/emotional disturbance via an I.E.P, and at the University level providing staff/student mental health services.

Gidai has a broad and unique base of experience counseling children and early/late adolescents. Areas of emphasis w/children include A D D / A D H D , P T S D , oppositional/conduct disorders, schizophrenia/ psychosis, developmental delays, varying degrees of trauma, abandonment, dysfunctional family systems, and addiction. Mr. Maaza also focuses on identifying conflict in immigrants and first generation youth who are navigating racial and cultural oppression.

He has a strong base of counseling adults. His specialty areas include varying traumas, PTSD, depression, various mood disorders, ADD/ADHD disorder, abandonment, dysfunctional



see **MAZAA** on page 14

What about these Black Inventors

Who was the first Black female inventor?

Martha Jones is credited as the first African American woman to receive a patent in the United States. Jones was granted a patent in 1868 for developing a cornhusker. The invention husked, shelled, cut up, and separated husks from the grain. Jones' invention marked a significant step forward in agricultural production. Jones also promoted corn husks as a hay replacement to feed farm animals, significantly reducing waste.

Inventions in Agriculture

Booker T. Whatley: Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

In his 1987 handbook, "How to Make \$100,000 Farming 25 Acres," Booker T. Whatley outlined clientele membership clubs and other farming practices that remain in demand today. Clientele membership clubs, the beginnings of the modern CSA, provided farmers with a guaranteed income, reduced farm waste, and provided community members with fresh produce.

Charles and Shirley Sherrod: Community Land Trusts

In 1969, Charles and Shirley Sherrod founded New Communities. The Georgia-based farm collective launched community land trusts around the country and across the globe. Community land trusts split land ownership among a group of individuals, providing opportunities for communal farming and gardening, conservation, affordable housing, and land connection.

source: www.Bestcolleges.com

Nourishing Our Nation

A Brief History of African American Cuisine

By: Ashley Sankey

Education Facilitator and Digital
Storytelling Administrative Assistant



On June 19, 1865, the news of emancipation finally reached those enslaved in Galveston, Texas, when Union General Gordon Granger announced General Order No. 3, declaring all enslaved individuals free. Although many enslaved African Americans celebrated two years earlier when President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation—a decree that declared freedom for enslaved people in Confederate states—Texas, the westernmost Confederate-aligned state, continued to practice slavery. When Union troops arrived and enforced emancipation, the formerly enslaved celebrated. This observation became known as “Juneteenth.”

Juneteenth celebrations often included traditional foods, which were crucial in maintaining cultural heritage and fostering community bonds among African Americans. The meals African Americans used for survival and cultural retention

remained steadfast in the community and played an important role in significant historical events, particularly during the struggle for Black self-determination.

From the thriving fields of Africa to the vibrant streets of New Orleans, and from the innovative kitchens of Monticello to the activism-fueled gatherings of the Civil Rights Movement, African American cuisine has profoundly influenced the culinary landscape of America. Today, as you enjoy a steaming plate of macaroni and cheese or devour a slice of bean pie, recognize the labor and brilliance woven into these recipes.

Recipes

The legacy of African American cuisine is a testament to the enduring spirit and cultural richness that continue to shape our culinary world.■

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The African-American Historical & Cultural Museum of the San Joaquin Valley

Meet the recently elected Executive Director of our beloved African American museum. Alondra Williams-Vasquez is a dedicated professional with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a Master's in Community Economic Development.

Hailing from Fresno, she boasts a robust background in pre-development across both private and governmental spheres, nonprofit business development, strategic partnership cultivation, and nonprofit management. With over two decades of experience in the public and private sectors, Alondra has been instrumental in fostering public safety, equity, economic development, and fundraising initiatives across diverse communities throughout California.

Raised by a single mother in Southwest Fresno, Alondra's upbringing instilled in her a deep commitment to social causes, including increasing affordable housing, enhancing access to quality education, supporting re-entry programs, and improving environmental health and food access in Central California. Her passion for community empowerment is evident in her work, where she strives to amplify local power-building efforts and empower individuals to realize their visions for themselves and their communities.



Lynnette Brown, Chairwoman of the museum Board says, "Alondra is doing things that has never been done at the museum. The community is truly blessed to have her and they should be informed of her talent..."

Alondra's exceptional interpersonal skills have enabled her to forge impactful relationships with stakeholders at all levels, from local businesses to executive management and government officials. With a proven track record in brokering productive community and government partnerships, she has played a pivotal role in implementing new projects and providing innovative solutions to address pressing community needs.

Beyond her professional endeavors, Alondra is a multifaceted creative, showcasing her talents as a visual artist and performer since her youth. Her artwork adorns various local art studios and creative spaces, while her performances in productions such as Actin' Up Entertainment's "The Greatest Gift," "Ordinary People,

see **MUSEUM** continued on pg. 14

African American Renaissance

Alma Palmer - Legacy
Benjamin Banneker Estates
William Bigby "Bigby Villa" -Legacy
Beatrice M. Cooley "Kearney Cooley Plaza" - Legacy
Bigby Villa Complex
Blue ocean development
Bruce Bowen
Carter Memorial AME
Chandler Airport
Cecil C. Hinton "Hinton Center" -Legacy
Hilltop Cecil Smith - Legacy
Charles Bailey Sr, I - Legacy
Mrs. Beatrice Owens - Legacy
Danny Alberty - History Maker
Dottie Smith - Legacy
Dr. Earl Randolph Meyers -Legacy
Dr. Fitzalbert Marius - Legacy
Dr. Ned Doffoney - Legacy
Edison High School - Legacy
Fresno colony
Floyd & James White - Legacy
Frank H. Ball Park
Gaston Middle school complex
Gene "Sax King" Morris -Legacy
Grape Vine Magazine Headquarters
Jack Kelley - Legacy
Jessie E Cooley Jr. Funeral Home- Legacy
Historic Marcus Pharmacy -Legacy
John Hale Medical Center Founders
Joe Williams "Franklin Headstart" - Legacy
JUDGE HUGH WESLEY GOODWIN Sr.
Katrina Lloyd Kearney Blvd.
King Solomon Missionary Baptist Church
Mac Foster "Fought Muhammad Ali- Legacy
Mary Curry - Legacy
Mary Ella Brown Center
Martin Luther King Jr. School -Legacy
North Ave. Community Center
Old North Ave. Community Center
Pandas Day Care - Legacy
Pearly Grove
Robert Fox- Legacy
Robert Golden - Golden C.A. -History Maker
Ricky Manning Jr. - History Maker
Richard Keyes

These are points
of interest that
are available to
view & read at
www.fresnolegacy.com.

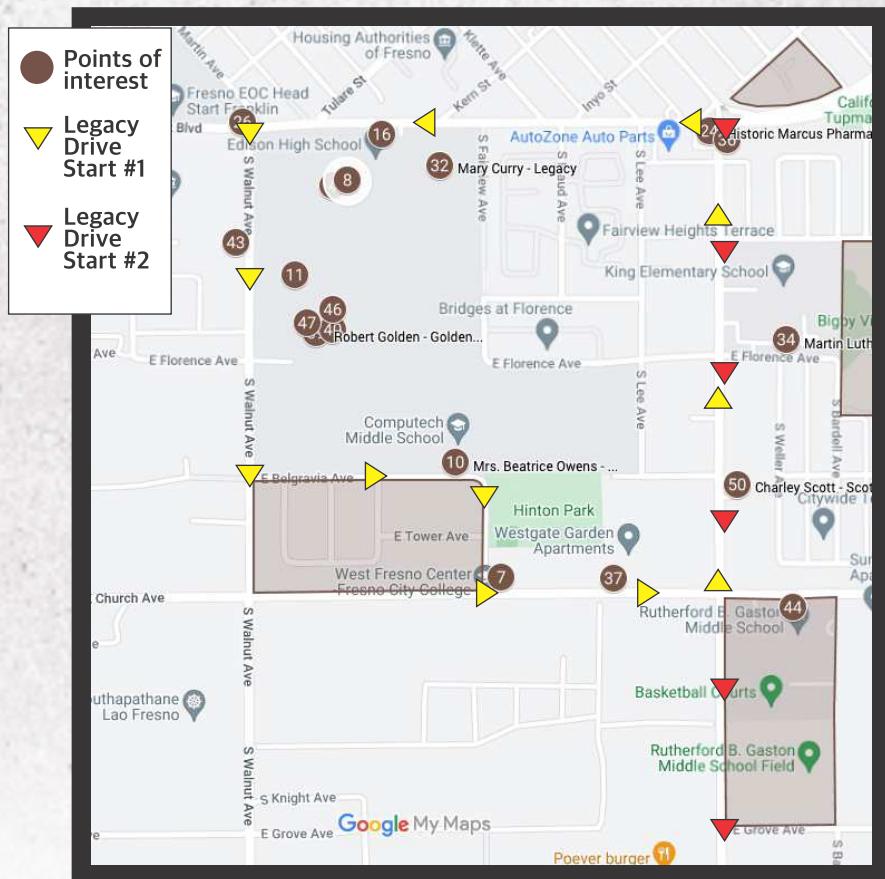
SCAN the QR code
to visit the site
and map.



LEGACY

Drive

Rudy's Elm Pharmacy - Legacy
 Rueben Scott "Providence Comty. Baptist Church" - Legacy
 Rutherford B. Gaston Middle School - Legacy
 St. Rest Missionary Baptist Church - Legacy
 Tim McDonald - History Maker
 Tony "DB Guru" Perry - History Maker
 Westside 7th Day Adventist Church
 Historic Second Baptist Church- Legacy
 Charley Scott - Scott's Cleaners - Legacy
 Sergeant Irwin Foster Sr.
 Silver Dollar Café
 W.E.B. DuBois School - History Maker
 William Day - Legacy
 Woody Miller - Legacy



becoming the number one contender in world. Moreover, by 1972, Mac Foster and Muhammad Ali were on a collision course in Tokyo, Japan where they duked it out for 15 rounds. After their fight Muhammad Ali was quoted saying he “underrated” Mac Foster and that “he’s one of few fighters that could last 15 rounds with me.”

Inasmuch, their relationship grew into a friendship and they became sparring partners and legends in their sport during a legendary period of professional boxing. Mac Foster, Fresno’s first and only All Service Military Champion and one of our greatest sports heroes. ■

Extraordinary Love," "Music Matters," and the coproduction of Langston Hughes' "Black Nativity" with Shine Theater and Fresno Pacific College have earned her acclaim as a headliner.

Driven by her commitment to community enrichment and creative expression, Alondra Williams-Vasquez continues to make meaningful contributions to the cultural and socioeconomic fabric of Central California. ■

MAZAA continue from pg. 8

family systems, and addiction.

Gidai is a firm believer in the holistic approach that “it takes a village to heal all individuals seeking counseling”.

“Healing for me is reconciling myself with my history, my family, and my community. I hold my healing in the highest regard, because I am unable to give without being resourced enough to give.” ■

Next Issue: _____



Southwest Fresno Development Corp. with Allysunn Walker

We are leading a wealth-building movement for Fresno’s Golden Westside through promoting and coaching residents to homeownership, and supporting small businesses and community-serving non-profits. More than 1,000 homes will be built in the 93706 community over the next 10 years. Our primary goal is to make sure this opportunity does not pass our residents by.

www.swfresnodc.com





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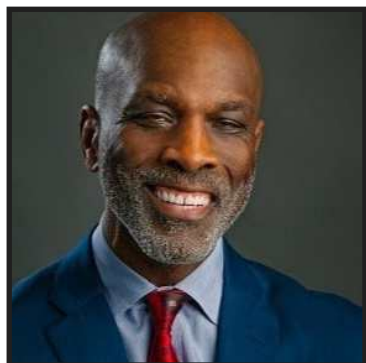
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Creating a Future Where Your Legacy Shines In The Greatness Of The People



by: Dr. Robert Watts Jr.

During a visit to China, I spent a day walking on a small portion of the Great Wall. I say a small portion because it is a masterpiece megalith of ancient engineering, it hangs, serpentines, and disappears into the dense forest canopy for 13,171 miles. That equals 47 one-way flights from San Francisco, Ca, to New York City. It took 2,300 years to construct.

It required a shared vision, coordination, and commitment between five dynasties to achieve the feat: (208 B.C.E. (Qin Dynasty), First century B.C.E. (Han Dynasty), Seventh century C.E. (Sui Dynasty), 113-1198 (Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period) and 1368-1640 (from Hongwu Emperor until Wanli emperor of the Ming Dynasty).

This accomplishment shows what can be achieved when leaders share a common vision, value the people who follow them, and commit

themselves to contributing to a future where they won't exist or benefit from their efforts. Structurally, it was a model for enacting goals, policies, and procedures to drive a succession plan to ensure the construction of defense from military attack and invasion from foreign threats.

Operationally and culturally, it was a model of continuity and congruency of values, love of country, and understanding of LEGACY. In my 28 years of providing consultancy and coaching to leaders, I have encouraged adopting these models - leaders that embraced them have empowered people to shape healthy cultures, increase human capacity, and retain talent to support long-term sustainability.

Today, our Great Wall is our people, and the threat is the shrinking talent pool in the United States. As leaders, we must apply a greater strategic focus to developing talent internal to our businesses and communities. Employee turnover and failing public school students represent poorly built or crumbling walls

Let's build a future that will come through the work of those we prepare to live and lead in our stead. ■

An Organization working towards a better community



Fresno

by: Debbie Darden

The Black American Political Association of California - Fresno exists to ensure that equitable access to resources impacting education, employment, and economic development are made available for the underserved residents of Fresno, California. Our goal is to create a robust and durable network that has the capacity to:

- Build resources and structures to assist underserved communities in their pursuit of autonomy
- Leverage relationships with allies and community partners to ensure that economic and educational resources are equitably distributed.
- Provide pathways to engagement for community members who desire to be involved in Fresno's political landscape to ensure that all voices have their rightful place in the conversations that shape the city's future.

BAPAC-Fresno understands that Fresno has a very diverse and unique make up and our vision is to ensure that the structures of power and influence reflect the diversity at every level of civic engagement.

In our mission as advocates for equity to the African American, and other underserved communities; we are committed to expand our efforts for unity and open-ended inclusion of all persons of goodwill that are willing to partner with us. ■

for more information please visit our website at: www.bapacfresno.com



Confidence and Narcissism Are Actually Nothing Alike

The Traits of Narcissism vs. Confidence

Elizabeth Hinkle says that “we often assume someone with narcissism is confident.” But she says that’s a misconception. “It’s difficult to understand that people with narcissism deep down do not generally have positive feelings about themselves or healthy self-esteem.”

A 2018 paper shed more light on the qualities of narcissism in comparison to confidence. The research analysed the traits of narcissism against self-esteem. It found that both were related to agency, assertiveness, positive emotions and a drive for rewards.

“But that’s essentially where the similarities ended,” Kaufman summarized in *Scientific American*. “In fact, narcissism and self-esteem differed on 63% of the other traits that were assessed.”

The authors concluded: “Unlike self-esteem, narcissism was related to callousness, grandiosity, entitlement, and demeaning attitudes towards others.”

Some of the other trait-specific findings included:

- Self-esteem is more strongly linked to conscientiousness and perseverance
- Narcissists are more antagonistic; those with healthy self-esteem are agreeable
- Narcissism is linked to feeling and expressing anger
- Narcissists are more prone to arguing and social comparisons

Interestingly, narcissists feel central to their social networks, and they perceive other people in their network as narcissistic, neurotic, and disagreeable. On the other hand, self-esteem is related to feeling close to others in their social network, and perceiving them as intelligent, likeable, and kind. What’s more, self-esteem was strongly linked to lower levels of anxiety and depression. Narcissism only weakly related to those outcomes. It was more linked to antisocial behavior, substance misuse, and aggression. ■

Written by: Clare Wiley

Published On:

January 28, 2021

Talkspace.com

Knowing your Credit Score can make all the difference in the world.

By: Marcus Winston

Your credit score is everything in today's America. It is the dividing line between quality of life, cost of life, and length of life. It allows access to housing, jobs, funding, furniture, cars, and cash. Your credit score is a risk scoring system used to gauge your financial stability and responsibility. Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion are some of the biggest scoring and reporting companies. They collect your payment history from creditors, report that information to your consumer report, and score that information based on risk of repayment. Credit scores range from 300 - 850.

It is not the responsibility of the reporting companies to make sure that all the information they find about you is accurate. In fact, most credit scores include inaccuracies. Banks and lending companies will charge more in interest when your score is low and very little interest when your score is high.

The solution is financial knowledge, because knowledge is power. We learn the system, then we play the game. So, with new knowledge your credit scoring system you can begin to score victories.

The percentage of your Credit Score breaks down as follows:

35% = 192.5 Points. Payment History – On time payments is the biggest credit factor. On time payments shows lenders consistency.

30% = 165 Points. Credit Utilization - Ratio of total available credit and credit used. Keep a low credit utilization percentage to raise credit scores.

15% = 82.5 Points. Length of Credit History – Having a long history of the same credit accounts will improve your credit because it shows consistency.

10% = 55 Points Credit Mix – Having a variety of credit accounts. Car Loans, Student Loans, Credit Cards, Secured Loans, Personal Loans and Debt Consolidation loans.

10% = 55 Points New Credit – Focuses on inquiries and pursuit of new lines of credit. Too many applications for credit will reduce your score.

Excellent Credit 750 – 850 score Good Credit 750 - 680 score Average Credit 680 – 600 score Poor Credit 600 - 300 score. ■

Miss Black Fresno Teen Pageant



The Miss Black Fresno Teen Pageant and Central Valley Juneteenth have partnered to make the 2025 event a spectacular competition.

This city-wide collaboration and competition will showcase one (1) young lady from each highschools Black Student Union (BSU). They will compete in the three (3) categories: FunWear, Talent, Evening Gown, and Judges Question.

Pageant Executive Director, Viva Straughter believes "This is a legacy and culture that we embrace and empower our young Black ladies."

Viva believes that the contestants can use this pageant as an opportunity to network, be a role model in their community and receive vital life skills from the workshops.

The pageant will be held during Black History Month on Saturday, February 22, 2025 at Fresno High School's Royce Hall.

These young ladies practice two (2) times per month receiving coaching, training, and mentoring in the areas of entrepreneurship, finance, etiquette, health and wellness. To meet the contestants visit the pageant website at www.leadnow.org ■



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BLAKENEY'S CHILDREN FOUNDATION

The Blakeney Children's Foundation was inspired by the heartbreaking loss of one of Suzette's very own, Malik Blakeney, who was tragically killed in a car accident on January 10, 2022. He was just 26 years young.

Malik was a gifted soul who was a wonderful son, brother and dedicated father to his 3 year old daughter Brellie, and 6 year old stepson Jabriyl (popppa).

The Question Was Asked ~

What happens to the children who are left behind? Who helps them financially and emotionally when they are struggling?

Mrs. Kelley's foundation has been helping in many ways. Through BCF over 30 families have been helped through some extremely difficult times. Her foundation extends beyond Malik Blakeney's tragic story. BCF reaches out to those families who have experienced a similar horrific loss. Suzette says "there are many more



children who need help during these rough times.”

What BCF Does~

The Blakeney Children's Foundation provides financial support to fatherless and motherless children in need. They reach out and surprise children with gifts on their birthdays and holidays, and finance vacations so that they can experience some much needed joy.

BCF also assist them in getting back to school by purchasing school supplies and clothes. These endeavors reassures the children that they are still loved, heard, and more importantly, not forgotten as they cope with their new reality. BCF can be contacted on their website. ■

www.blakeneychildrenfoundation.org

it's up to us to build on it.

As we celebrate Juneteenth, let it be a reminder that our work is far from over and that each of us have the power to carry our history forward.

Preserving Our Legacy:

Whether through education, business, activism, or simply by standing up for what is right, we must build on the foundation laid by our ancestors and community leaders.

Looking Ahead:

A Call to Action As we celebrate Juneteenth, we must reflect on both the historical fight for freedom and the ongoing fight for justice in our community today. Southwest Fresno is living proof of what's possible when we come together with a shared purpose.





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70 Years Young

**Aging is inevitable,
so you might as well
do it with grace.**

by: Donpreyel Martin

Joycelyn Forest, born in New Orleans, Louisiana and mother to two (2) daughters Lashandra Washington and LaG'na Wilson. She is a retired federal employee of 30 years from 1980-2010. Joycelyn currently is a Paraprofessional for Fresno Unified School District because she loves working with children.

Joycelyn says “My health is important to me so that I may be able to function and take care of myself on a daily basis. Her motto is agree to disagree, be self sufficient, so that you can provide what you need for life-long survival. She says that “70 feels great to me, blessed to be here in my right mind and fairly good health and looking forward to more years to come.

What is most important to Joycelyn is spending priceless time with her most valuable group of people, her kids, grandkids, great grandkids, family and friends.

Ms. Joycelyn Forest believes that we should all “live a happy life with the least amount of drama, stay away from negativity, have faith in the Lord and be patient as he will see you through and that your blessings will come. ■



Lashandra (left) Joycelyn (Middle) and LaG'na (right)



BUILDING OUR LEGACY



Events Coming Up!

info@centralvalleyjuneteenth.com

Martin Luther King March
Trailblazers Award - African American Museum
Miss Black Fresno Teen
Women of Virtue First Ladies Celebration
Juneteenth Celebration Valley-Wide
and more...



Community Partners



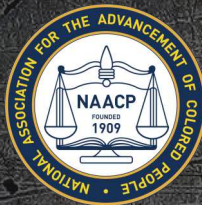
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