



ESTHER BUSH

Obama honors Bush

On Feb. 26, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh President and CEO Esther Bush was honored in Washington, D.C., as part of the "White House Champions of Change: Achieving Educational Excellence for the Next Generation of African Americans" event. Bush is being recognized with nine other leaders for her devotion to helping further education among African-Americans.

"President Obama has made providing a complete and competitive education for all Americans—from cradle to career—a top priority," said Senior Advisor Valerie Jarrett in a press release. "That's why, last summer, he signed an executive order to establish the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African-Americans. This

week, we look forward to welcoming Champions of Change who have been working to ensure that all African-American students receive an education that

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fully prepares them for high school graduation, college completion and productive careers."

As a former high school teacher, college administrator and member of the State Board of Education, Bush has made education a top priority at the Urban League. The local Urban League's education programs include its charter school and Black Male Leadership Development Institute.

The Champions of Change program was created as a part of President Obama's Winning the Future initiative. Each week, the White House features a group of Americans—individuals, businesses and organizations—who are doing extraordinary things to empower and inspire members of their communities.

Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan also made an announcement about the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans. This initiative, established in 2012, will work across Federal agencies and with partners and communities nationwide to produce a more effective continuum of education programs for African-American students. The initiative aims to ensure that all African-American students receive an education that fully prepares them for high school graduation, college completion, and productive careers.



AWC spotlights Black, Jewish unity

by Rebecca Nuttall

Courier Staff Writer

Two years ago in March 2011, the August Wilson Center for African American Culture came under fire when they featured Minister Louis Farrakhan in a town hall meeting hosted by radio talk show host Bev Smith. Farrakhan has long been criticized by the Jewish community for vial anti-Semitic comments he's made in previous decades.

However, African-Americans and Jews have a long standing history of working together to fight oppression against their communities, and despite the recent controversy this partnership continues today.

As part of the August Wilson Center for African American Culture's "Great Collaborations Series," on Feb. 21 they hosted a town hall meeting with leaders from the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Unit of the NAACP and the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh. Together, Urban League President and CEO Esther Bush, NAACP President Connie Parker and Gregg Roman, director of the Jewish Federation's community relations council, shared the history of their organization and the collaborations between the African-American and Jewish communities over the years.

"An issue that affects someone in Homewood will eventually affect someone in Squirrel Hill in time," Roman said. "Our cooperation can never be about winning or losing. We must always win together."

The event "Early 20th

Century Collaborations, 1900-1930 — The Birth of the NAACP and National Urban League" gave members a history lesson in the origins of the NAACP, the Urban League and the Jewish Federation. In particular, the panelists provided little known information on the integral role Jews played in the leadership of the NAACP and Urban League.

The panelists also discussed their organization's plans to work together in the future to address issues of importance to their communities, but did not provide specifics on any initiatives in the works. Still, in their comments, all three leaders touched on the importance of similar issues such as health care, education, and employment.

"The things that are happening, we're allowing it to happen," Parker said, encouraging more activism. "Until we have jobs, until we have a higher income in our community, we're in trouble."

While interested in how the three organizations planned to work together today, members of the audience also asked how the Urban League and the NAACP planned to collaborate in the future as the city's two most prominent Black organizations.

"The Urban League has always been open to collaborations with the NAACP," Bush said, and added that there are collaborations happening behind the scenes. "I will say we need to do more together and will do more."

The Great Collaborations

Series was created to examine how African-Americans and Jews worked together throughout the past decade. The series includes four town hall meetings addressing how Jews and African-Americans partnered successfully in the past and what the two communities can accomplish together in the future.

The series was spurred by the center's exhibition "The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936," which explores the African-American and Jewish athletes who boycotted, participated in, or were barred from the Olympic Games. The exhibition is on loan from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and presented in collaboration with the Holocaust Center of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh.



Groups want input on police chief

PITTSBURGH — The American Civil Liberties Union and several community groups are planning a news conference to push for more input before Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl hires a new police chief.

Ravenstahl demanded Chief Nate Harper's resignation last week in the wake of a federal investigation into the handling of money the city has collected from bars and other businesses when its officers are hired to work security details while off-duty.

The groups plan a news conference before City Council's Wednesday morning meeting at which they'll call on City Council to hold hearings on the hiring of a new chief.

The Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, the local NAACP branch, the Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network and other groups, including the Alliance for Police Accountability, will explain their position at that time.



Unsung Heroes

by Debbie Norrell
Courier Staff Writer

According to Webster's Dictionary the word *unsung* is used to define someone who is not celebrated or praised.

On Feb. 22, at the Lemont Restaurant the Ivy Charitable Endowment of Pittsburgh Inc., Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated (Alpha Alpha Omega Chapter) presented their Founders' Day Community Awards Reception: *Unsung Heroes*. Guest enjoyed a beautiful view, divine hors d'oeuvres and a well-organized program. ICE President Delphina Briscoe and Christina Wilds, chapter president, welcomed the crowd and Great Lakes Regional Director Charlene Truitt Nelson was in town to greet sorors, friends and *Unsung Heroes*. Delphina Briscoe and Carol Brackett (ICE, vice president) presented awards to some of Pittsburgh's best and brightest.

The *Unsung Heroes* of education were Linda S. Lane, Ed.D., superintendent, Pittsburgh Public Schools; Mark Brentley Sr., board of directors, Pittsburgh Public Schools; Gail

Edwards, PhD, principal and CEO, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh Charter School.

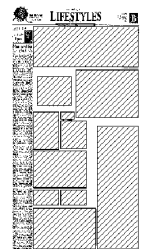
In the field of health Kathy Mayle Towns, dean of nursing at the Community College of Allegheny County, was honored as well as Wilford Payne, executive director of PCHA Inc.-Alma Ilery Medical Center.

In the humanities, Mildred E. Morrison, administrator Allegheny County Department of Human Services Area Agency on Aging, and Cecilia Jenkins, executive director of Pittsburgh Community Services Inc. were honored.

Unsung Heroes the Arts were Patrice Wade Johnson, M.Ed, screenplay writer/author) and Janera Solomon executive director of the Kelly Strayhorn Theater.

In the field of business, Theodore R. Vasser III, director, Pupil Transportation for the Pittsburgh Public Schools was honored as well as K. Chase Patterson, president and CEO of Corporate Diversity Associates, LLC.

On this night there was no lack of celebration and heartfelt praise.





UNSUNG HEROES—Gail Edwards, Mark Brentley and Mildred Morrison



UNSUNG HEROES—Theodore R. Vasser III, Janera Solomon, Wilford Payne and Cecelia Jenkins

Community activists demand input in police chief selection

by Rebecca Nuttall

Courier Staff Writer

Questions still surround the resignation of former Pittsburgh Bureau of Police Chief Nate Harper, who stepped down after more than 35 years of service on the force amid pressure from a federal investigation. But the Pittsburgh activist community already has their sights set on the next chief and is being proactive to ensure their input is factored into the mayor's decision.

"As you know we're in a difficult moment in the history of our city with regard to the police bureau," said Tim Stevens, chairman of the Black Political Empowerment Project at a press conference on Feb. 27. "Maybe the next police chief just has to be bold, bold enough to stand up to officers who abuse their power. Even with that blue uniform and history, they must be as unbiased against their officers as possible."

While the news media is focused on corruption within the police force with regard to funds that were possibly misappropriated, community representatives at the press conference outside of City Council Chambers were more concerned with issues such as police brutality and the lack of diversity on the police force.

"This is imperative to repairing the relationship between the community and the police. The diversity of the police force has been an issue for many years," said Brandi

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Fisher, president of the Alliance for Police Accountability. "In order to change that we need to focus on a common ground of trust."

The activists made reference to Jordan Miles, a young man allegedly beaten by three police officers; and Ka'Sandra Wade, a woman who was murdered after police responded to a domestic violence call from her home and left before speaking with her. They said these incidents were key exam-

ples of police misconduct and called for the next police chief to enforce regulations put in place by a 1997 consent decree, enacted in response to the deaths of two African-Americans in police custody. However, the decree was lifted from the police bureau in 2001.

"For sometime now the police department in Pittsburgh has felt like a runaway train. It hasn't always been this way and it doesn't need to be this way," said Vic Walczak, legal director of the ACLU of Pennsylvania. "What we're saying is pledge commitment to the management controls in the consent decree."

The coalition calling for input in the selection of the next police chief is made up of members from B-PEP, the NAACP, ACLU, Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network, Action United, the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and the APA.

"Without this basic trust bad things happen. We need a police chief who is committed to having real ongoing discussion with the community," said Hazel Blackman, western regional council representative for Action United. "We need a police chief who is committed to building a police force that looks like us."

City Council representatives Rev. Ricky Burgess, Bill Peduto, Daniel Lavelle, Bruce Krauss, Darlene Harris and Theresa Kail-Smith have already expressed their support for community input. While



seen



Bill Wade/Post-Gazette

Honorees Sigo Falk, George Greer, Esther Bush, David Shapira and Tony Dorsett

History Makers Dinner

The Senator John Heinz History Center held its 21st Annual History Makers Award Dinner Thursday at the Fairmont Pittsburgh. The sold-out crowd of 400 came to honor Eden Hall Foundation chairman George Greer, Falk Foundation chairman Sigo Falk, Giant Eagle executive chairman David Shapira, Urban League president Esther Bush and former Dallas Cowboy and Pitt Panther Tony Dorsett.



Scope of infant mortality disparities in Allegheny County unacceptable



ESTHER BUSH

This month's issue on infant mortality is a continuation of the monthly series started last year focusing on health disparities in the Pittsburgh region. The series is a partnership among the New Pittsburgh Courier, Community PARTners (a core service of the University of Pittsburgh's Clinical and Translational Science Institute—CTSI) and the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh. Jessica Griffin Burke, PhD, MHS, associate professor of behavioral and community health sciences at Pitt, sat down with Esther L. Bush, president and CEO of the Urban League, to talk about this month's topic.

by Jessica Griffin Burke, PhD, MHS

JGB: Ms. Bush, I know from working with you that issues related to infant and child health are very important to you. What are your thoughts about the topic this month?

EB: The numbers about the scope of the disparities in infant mortality in Allegheny County are staggering, overwhelming and, frankly, unacceptable. I've been in Pittsburgh for a long time; and, unfortunately, the entire time that I've been in this wonderful city those numbers have been the same. It's time for us to work together, as a community, to do something to improve maternal health and to reduce poor pregnancy outcomes.

JGB: What can or should we do differently now to deal with this issue?

EB: As I said, we need to work together.

That means that researchers need to work with community members to better understand the roots causes of these stark disparities. Dr. Dara Mendez's work exploring how neighborhood context matters for health is very important. Where you live can definitely affect your health. Dr. Mendez's work with the Birth Circle doulas and women gives us some clue about where to begin addressing issues related to how a neighborhood may contribute to low birth weight and preterm birth. The answer to reducing disparities in infant mortality likely lies in our ability to think creatively and to explore options that have not been considered until now.

JGB: It seems as if Dr. Lisa Bodnar's work also falls into the category of issues that haven't been well investigated yet.

What do you think of her work suggesting that vitamin D may be contributing to the disparities in infant mortality we see here in Pittsburgh?

EB: Well, I do know that it's cold and gray here in the winter months and that we don't see the sun much! I didn't know about the potential connection between vitamin D deficiency and poor pregnancy outcomes. While I understand that she is still conducting necessary research, it's possible that a vitamin D supplement could help. I look forward to learning more as her research continues.

JGB: Let's go back to what you were saying about making progress in our efforts to





Bob Donaldson/Post-Gazette
A past exhibit at The Art All Night gallery show.

THE SPRING CRAWL

FRIDAY NIGHT'S GALLERY CRAWL IS THE BEGINNING OF AN ARTY WEEKEND



Gallery Crawl in the Cultural District.

COVER STORY

Pittsburgh's art-filled weekend begins right after work lets out on Friday with the Gallery Crawl and continues, after a night's sleep and a few meals, on Saturday with the opening of Art All Night in Lawrenceville.

The Gallery Crawl, presented by the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, has

become a popular trek through the Cultural District, attracting as many as 5,000 crawlers when the weather cooperates, like it is scheduled to do on Friday (bring a jacket).

It started in 2004, says Darcy Kucenic, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's manager of education and operations, with four or five stops, mainly Wood Street Galleries and SPACE. Now there are three dozen.

"We have more participating venues, I think, than ever. We actually had to add an extra printed flap to our map."

Keeping with tradition, there is a

new exhibition at Wood Street Galleries with the opening of "Memento Mori," Brooklyn-based Gregory Barsamian's dream-inspired kinetic sculpture spinning rapidly in a strobe-lit room.

That is not to be confused, but certainly will, with "Memento Mori," a new set of billboards in Tito Way by Mary Mazziotti serving to remind the viewer that Death keeps a very hectic schedule. They will be there for two years, replacing the long-running Shepard Fairey billboards.

SPACE is the place for the ongoing

