Urban League of
Greater Pittsburgh

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Agency Media Report

March, April, May

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Date	Topic	Media Outlet
2/23/2014	**171st celebrates black history at annual luncheon** **Mentions: Esther Bush**	Beaver County Times
3/2/14	**New Effort Aims at teach benefits of bank accounts** **Mentions: Esther Bush, Bank On, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
3/4/2014	**Oral Health**	New Pittsburgh Courier
3/4/2014	**Helping under-banked households**	New Pittsburgh Courier
3/9/2014	**A Community Rises Up Amid Tragedy**	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
3/11/14	**Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool Youth Development Network—PSAYDN Advocacy Day, March 11, 12 & 13** **Mentions: Lori Rue, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	PSAYDN
3/11/2014	**Community Leaders Ask Neighbors to Support Teacher Performance Standards**	Pittsburgh Media Today
Spring Issue	**Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh—News & Views Spring 2014**	Housing Authority Newsletter
3/13/2014	**Hungry for consumer information** **Mentions: Urban League of Pittsburgh**	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
3/15/2014	**Girls mentor program names local director** **Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
3/16/14	**Effort Aims at teach benefits of bank accounts (reprinted in Sunday Extra Section)** **Mentions: Esther Bush, Bank On, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
3/17/2014	**Civil Rights groups to uphold hate crimes law** **Mentions: Urban League**	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Date	Topic	Media Outlet
3/17/2014	**Charter schools in tense unions** **Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh Charter School**	Tribune Review
3/20/2014	**Community Forum on public schools draws Jewish interest** **Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh Charter School.**	The Jewish Chronicle
3/25/2014	**Colon Health**	New Pittsburgh Courier
3/27/2014	**Even most careful consumer can be duped** **Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
3/30/2014	**Another river to cross** **Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh Charter School**	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
4/1/2014	**Beyond the Bedside** **Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh Charter School**	Western Pennsylvania Healthcare News
4/4/2014	**Urban League: Blacks worse off** **Mentions: Marc Morial and National Urban League**	Herald-Standard (Uniontown)
4/4/2014	**African-American Leaders to Host Candidate Forum to Address Community Issues** **Mentions: Esther Bush, Urban League of Greater Pitts-burgh**	Urban Media Today
4/15/2014	**McIntosh new Urban League VP**	New Pittsburgh Courier
4/16/2014	**Pittsburgh mayor runs down progress, plans** **Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, references Bank On**	Tribune-Review
4/22/2014	**Governor Candidates Forum** **Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	African America Governors Forum Coalition

Date	Topic	Media Outlet
4/24/2014	**Teacher Evaluation Reform Series Part One: A deep History in the midst of a New System** **Mentions: Esther L. Bush, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	Urban Media Today
4/24/2014	**Teacher Evaluation Reform Series Part Two: RISE Uncovers Key Areas of Concern** **Mentions: Esther L. Bush, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	Urban Media Today
4/22/2014	**Doss named associate publisher Who's Who in Black Pittsburgh** **Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	New Pittsburgh Courier
4/28/2014	**B-PEP Jazz 'FUN'-Raiser** **Mentions: Ester Bush, Monique McIntosh**	Pittsburgh Post Gazette
4/30/2014	**Gallery Crawl in the Cultural District** **Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	Pittsburgh City Paper
5/1/2014	**May Happenings** **Mentions: CEO, Esther Bush, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	Whirl Magazine
5/1/2014	**People on the Move** **Mentions: Monique McIntosh, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	Pittsburgh Business Times
5/6/2014	**Closed-door AWC meeting introduces developer/ community** **Mentions: Esther Bush, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	New Pittsburgh Courier
5/23/2014	**Teachers' absences called "startling"** **Mentions: Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh**	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
5/28/2014	**Tough Subject: PPS, union differ on usefulness of teacher-quality report**	Pittsburgh City Paper

BEAVER COUNTY TIMES

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171st celebrates black history at annual luncheon

Keynote speaker shares thoughts on diversity, African-American progress

BY RACHEL MORGAN
RMORGAN@TIMESONLINE.COM

MOON TWP. — The 171st Air Refueling Wing hosted its 31st annual African-American Heritage Luncheon Friday — and the keynote speaker was someone who stood for both.

Jacquet Bazemore, executive director of Five Star Corp., former heavyweight kickboxing champion, Marine Corps veteran who served two tours in Vietnam and sparring partner to Muhammad Ali, sounded off on everything from his time served in Vietnam, to watching President Barack Obama being elected as the first African-American president to what it means to be black today.

The Pittsburgh native started off talking about the two tours he served in Vietnam.

"At the same time, in those years, there was a struggle going in the world — that struggle was a struggle against the idea of democracy and the idea of communism and they were fighting a war in Vietnam," he said. "But back in this country, there was another war going on. There

HISTORY, PAGE C2

was a war between the attitudes of white Americans against black Americans. And it wasn't everywhere, but it was mainly down in the South where we would turn on the news and hear the news about how black people were being beaten and dogs were being set on them and how the educational opportunities weren't given to blacks. It was a vicious time, a vicious time."

And then, about what it was like to see Obama be elected and inaugurated.

"My father sat and watched on TV when President Barack Obama was being elected," Bazemore said. "And then when he had his inauguration, we were together — and we cried. My father never thought that he would live to see the day that a man of color would become President of the United States of America."

He also warned against lumping one race into an existing stereotype.

"Black people are diverse," Bazemore said. "Black people aren't all walking around with their pants hanging down and hair in plaits and talking about, 'Gangster this, and gangster that,' and selling drugs on the corner and all those kind of things. But when people outside of our community see us, guess what their first perception is? ...Even us in our own community are upset about what we do and disrespect to one another."

But today, he said, is the time for change.

"But we are in a day now that there such an opportunity for all of us to embrace and engage and change things," Bazemore said.

Col. Edward Metzgar said at the luncheon he was proud of how far the military has come in terms of civil rights.

"Since (the 1970s,) we have come so far as a military organization," he said. "Back in the 1960s, the battle, the struggle that went in, especially in the Southern states in trying to achieve equality. And thankfully, all those things have been knocked down, and we live in an

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era in which the military is what you make of it."

Among the attendees of the event were unit members of the 171st, as well as Junior ROTC students from area high schools, including Canon-McMillian, Quaker Valley, Central Catholic, West Mifflin, Aliquippa, Sto-Rox, Beaver Area, West Allegheny and Westinghouse.

Past guest speakers include Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver Lynn Swann, Urban League of Pittsburgh Inc. President Esther Bush, Olympic gold medalist Roger Kingdom, WPXI news anchor Vince Sims, WTAE news anchor Andrew Stockey, Executive Director/ Senior Vice President of Bidwell Training Center Inc. Valerie Njie and Principal Director of Space Launch Engineering and Acquisition, Space Systems Group at the Aerospace Corp., Karolyn Young.

Photo by Sally Maxson of The Times
Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School student Quinton Monteiro performs during the African-American Heritage Luncheon at the Pittsburgh Airport Marriott on Friday.

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New effort aims to teach benefits of bank accounts

Seeks to discourage costly practices

By Kaitlynn Riely
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

When she was growing up, Esther Bush said, the financial advice she got time and time again was to save her money and to buy a house.

Also good advice: open a bank account.

The Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh — with the support of United Way of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto, Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, financial institutions and local community groups — recently launched a program to encourage people to sign up for low- or no-cost bank accounts.

The goal of "Bank On Greater Pittsburgh" is to discourage people from using resources such as payday loans and check-cashing businesses, which can often charge heavy fees, and instead use a bank account for paying bills and saving money.

In other words, said Ms. Bush, president and CEO of the Urban League, take the money you would have spent on a payday loan and add it to your grocery bill, or put it toward a car payment.

"There is a lot of common sense in this," she said, adding that talking about financial literacy is part of getting people to plan their finances, rather than live paycheck to paycheck.

"We want to help them to develop these habits," she said.

In Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, it seems, it's a message that could be particularly useful.

Bank On, a program that has been applied in many other U.S. cities, including San Francisco, keeps data on its website about the percentage of households that are "unbanked," meaning without checking or savings accounts, and that are "underbanked," meaning that the household has an account but still uses other services such as rent-to-own agreements and payday lending.

According to data on the Bank On website, which cites research statistics from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, 7.7 percent of households nationwide are unbanked and 17.9 percent are underbanked.

In Pittsburgh, the percentages are higher.

Ten percent of households in the city are considered unbanked, and just under 20 percent are underbanked.

In Allegheny County, 5.9 percent of households are unbanked and 17.4 percent are underbanked.

Not having a bank account can get expensive. The Bank On website, citing data from the Brookings Institution, said paying the extra fees that come with not having a bank account — such as buying money orders or paying for check-cashing services — can amount to $40,000 over a lifetime.

But while opening a bank account might seem an obvious step to take, not everyone does.

Angela Reynolds is director of programs for financially struggling adults and families at United Way of Allegheny County, which is funding the Bank On program with a $150,000 grant for three years. She said some people might live in neighborhoods where there's no traditional bank but there is a check-cashing place. Others might have grown up with the idea of keeping their money stored in the home.

Debra Squires, director of the family growth and child development department at the Urban League, said some people feel they do not make enough money to open a checking account, while others do not have the money to pay fees or meet the minimum balance. Still others have had a bad banking experience in the past

SEE **ACCOUNTS,** PAGE B-2

and feel they might no longer be eligible to open an account.

"Those are just some myths," Ms. Squires said.

The Urban League's program seeks to dispel many of those myths, by partnering with nine banks and federal credit unions, including PNC, Citizens and Dollar, which offer free or low-cost checking accounts.

Huntington Bank, one of the partners, has already signed up seven new customers who were previously unbanked or underbanked, introducing them to an account that has no minimum balance, no fees and a 24-hour grace period for overdraft fees, said Susan Baker Shipley, president of the bank's Western Pennsylvania and Ohio region, who added that another benefit from banking is that once a person has an account, he or she has created a relationship with a bank that can allow them to access further services.

By the end of the year, Ms. Squires said her goal is to have 1,000 people who were previously without a bank account or dependent on other, less reputable sources signed up.

"I am expecting that it will be much higher than that," she said.

Community groups, such as Just Harvest, are helping to spread the word about the Bank On program. For Just

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Harvest, it's a good time of year to be talking about opening an account, because the organization already has a program helping people complete their taxes, often finding that clients have no account into which they can place their refund checks, said Rochelle Jackson, its public policy advocate.

The bank account program will be coming up in conversation this tax season, she said.

"We're reaching out to them, to say, 'Hey, here's a better option for you and your family.'"

The Urban League won't consider its work done once a person opens a bank account, Ms. Squires said.

Just as Ms. Bush was encouraged to save and to buy a home, the next step is building the financial literacy of new bank account holders, and encouraging them to save and spend responsibly.

"We want ultimately to help families begin the asset-building process," Ms. Squires said.

More information is available at www.bankongreaterpittsburgh.com or by calling 412-227-4191.

Kaitlynn Riely: kriely@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1707.

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Oral Health

These monthly pages focus on health disparities in the Pittsburgh region. They educate the reader about key health issues and inform them about research opportunities and community resources. All articles can be accessed online at the New Pittsburgh Courier Web site. The monthly series is a partnership of the New Pittsburgh Courier, Community PARTners (a core service of the University of Pittsburgh's Clinical and Translational Science Institute—CTSI), the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and the UPMC Center for Engagement and Inclusion.

This month, the "Take Charge of Your Health Today" page focuses on oral health—understanding how both teeth and gum health relate to our overall health and the range of resources available here in Allegheny County. Maria Catrina D. Jaime, MPH, CPH, research coordinator with Community PARTners, and Esther L. Bush, president and CEO of the Urban League, sat down to talk about the importance of healthy teeth and gums.

MCDJ: Good morning, Ms. Bush. It's a privilege to get this opportunity to talk with you about one of my favorite topics in public health—oral health. As topics were chosen for each month's health segment, you thought it was important to highlight oral health in February. The American Dental Association (ADA) sponsors this month as National Children's Dental Health Month. Having a whole month dedicated to dental health helps increase awareness about oral health and why this is an important issue for the African American community and its youth.

EB: It's wonderful to talk with you. Yes, increasing awareness about oral health is really important because I think many of us take our teeth and gums for granted. We usually don't take action until we're in extreme pain from a toothache. This can then lead to an invasive dental procedure like a root canal. I personally have worked on brushing twice a day and flossing as often as possible, especially at night. As for youth, I've always valued the importance of establishing healthy habits early and in this case brushing and flossing regularly. Dr. Rubin supports how critical it is to start early with these types of dental habits. With respect to the African American community, it has been shown that African American men are at higher risk for oral cancer. Again, by practicing these healthy dental habits we can prevent these severe oral health outcomes.

MCDJ: Dr. Rubin advocates starting good habits early in childhood as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. As you mentioned, we may take for granted the importance of getting routine dental cleanings and exams. Higher-risk patients, like people with a history of dental disease, tobacco product use and excessive alcohol intake, should be seen by a dentist regularly. Also women, especially when pregnant, have special dental needs that need to be monitored and addressed by a dental professional. It's good to know that there are valuable dental resources available in the Pittsburgh community, including the Allegheny County Health Department. Dr. Rubin and his colleagues are providing quality dental care through the School of Dental Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh.

EB: Yes, and it's critical to know about groups who need to prioritize seeing a dental provider and the resources available to access dental care. Plus, it is important to also know about the research being conducted in the field of dental health. By encouraging participation from African Americans in research studies, we can learn more about how to provide better dental care for future generations.

MCDJ: It was so wonderful talking with you about dental health. These health segments help me stay informed with health topics important to our communities. Thank you for encouraging children, youth and adults to practice healthy dental habits at an early age. Next month we will focus on colon cancer. As always, if anyone has questions about what they see on this page, they can contact the Community PARTners Core at partners@hs.pitt.edu.

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ESTHER BUSH

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Helping under-banked households

New initiative connects consumers to traditional banking services

by Diane I. Daniels
For New Pittsburgh Courier

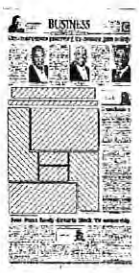
Statistics provided by officials of the Bank On Greater Pittsburgh program indicate that Allegheny County currently has 5.9 percent, or 30,950 unbanked households and 17.4 percent or 91,277 under-banked. According to Mayor Bill Peduto, "More than 10 percent or 14,012 of Pittsburgh residents have no bank account and another 19 percent or 27,209 residents rely heavily on risky alternative financial tools such as payday loans, check-cashing shops, and rent-to-own arrangements. This represents more than 130,000 households living without financial security."

With hopes to assist and to encourage unbanked and under-banked individuals and families to strongly consider opening bank accounts with traditional financial institutions opposed to continuing to rely on check-cashing or other alternative methods of banking, Esther L. Bush; president and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, Rich Fitzgerald; Allegheny County Executive and Bill Peduto; Mayor, City of Pittsburgh last week kicked off a new initiative called Bank On Greater Pittsburgh.

Endorsed by the National League of Cities and identified by Mayor Peduto as one of the top 100 items on his agenda, BOGP is a collaborative effort of the Urban League, City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, the United Way of Allegheny County, the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland and nine financial institutions along with numerous community agencies. The partnership is designed to develop pathways to access basic, free or low-cost financial institution transaction accounts and financial education. "The positive impact of connecting unbanked and under-banked consumers with traditional banking services is tantamount to increased income for consumers, who will save immeasurably in fees, since these consumers will no longer be reliant on check cashing services, pre-paid debit cards and payday lenders," indicated Howard B. Slaughter Jr. PhD, chairman of the BOGP and a seven year Urban League Board member. "Our goal is to help unbanked and under-banked individuals gain access to free, low-cost starter or "second chance" financial deposit accounts, as well as access other financial services and financial education."

Slaughter pointed out that one in five Black families does not have a bank account which is seven times higher than White households. He also acknowledged that a close view of a representative sample of the millennium generation earning up to $74,999 yearly is just as likely to use a prepaid debit card as someone earning less than $25,000 yearly. All reasons, he said why it is important for consumers to build wealth and longterm financial stability which is greatly enhanced when relying on the use of traditional banking services and products. He said increasing the knowledge of people using the products will have a cognizant impact on the finances of the family and ultimately for the region which is what BOGP hopes to accomplish.

Based on the insight of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and the funding capabilities of the United Way of Allegheny County, the BOGP is a collaboration between the two entities. Financial partners covering the Allegheny County region are Century Heritage Federal Credit Union, Citizens Bank, Dollar Bank, 5/3rd Bank, First Commonwealth Bank, First Niagara, Hill District Federal Credit Union, Huntington Bank and PNC Bank. Their responsibilities consist of assisting consumers plan and prepare to build financial relationships and expand their own client base.



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Community partners include Action Housing, Advantage Credit Counseling, Allegheny County Housing Authority, Holy Family Institute/Duquesne Light CAP, Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh, Just Harvest, NeighborWorks and South Hills Interfaith Ministries. Offerings of the partners contribute additional resources which enhance services received by clients through educational services and relationship building which can contribute to lifelong benefits.

"Bank On helps people become more self-reliant through better use of their hard-earned dollars," said Bush.

"The values emphasized by the program align with our focus on economic self-reliance, which is the benchmark measurement for the mission of the Urban League Movement.

We cannot achieve parity, power and civil rights without having the means to care for ourselves. Prudent management of our personal assets is fundamental to economic self-reliance."

Because of the strong involvement with the Urban League, county residents outside of the city of Pittsburgh are fully included in the BOGP. Urban League representatives say their Duquesne Family Support Center serves Duquesne, West Mifflin and other neighboring communities and works with residents in the area. The financial partner, Century Heritage Federal Credit Union also has office locations and serves McKeesport, Duquesne and West Mifflin. Citizens, 5/3 and PNC Banks have participating branches in Homestead, and Dollar Bank has one in McKeesport. Partnerships with community agencies, including the Steel Valley Family Center which serves Homestead and Munhall also exist.

People with existing bank accounts are encouraged to participate in the BOGP. Slaughter points out that in many cases they could be construed as an underbanked consumer. "These consumers are equally important to educate on the benefits of establishing a holistic approach to traditional banking services, which will enhance their financial acumen and mitigate their need to revert back to using non-traditional financial services."

Excited about and a cheerleader of the BOGP, Felicia Davis a graduate of the former Peabody High School with a Bachelor's Degree from Chatham University and Masters in Business Administration also a parent speaks from experience about being a victim of a cash advance lender. She outlined that as a result of using a non-traditional funding source to barrow $1000 due to a family emergency and later because of loss of employment it took her 12 months to repay the loan. Payments were $265 at an interest rate of 300 percent at the end of the 12 month term she had paid $3180.00. Her advice is for consumers to take advantage of the BOGP and to learn as much as possible to gain self-sufficiency.

(To learn more about the Bank on Greater Pittsburgh call 412-277-4150 or visit www.bankongreaterpittsburgh.org.)

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SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE—Felicia Davis shares her cash advance lender nightmare during the Bank On Greater Pittsburgh press conference. (Photos by Diane Daniels)

BANDING TOGETHER—Kicking off a new initiative, the Bank On Greater Pittsburgh are BOGP Chairman and Urban League Board member Dr. Howard B. Slaughter Jr., Susan B. Shipley; President Huntington Bank, Pittsburgh, Esther L. Bush; President and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald.

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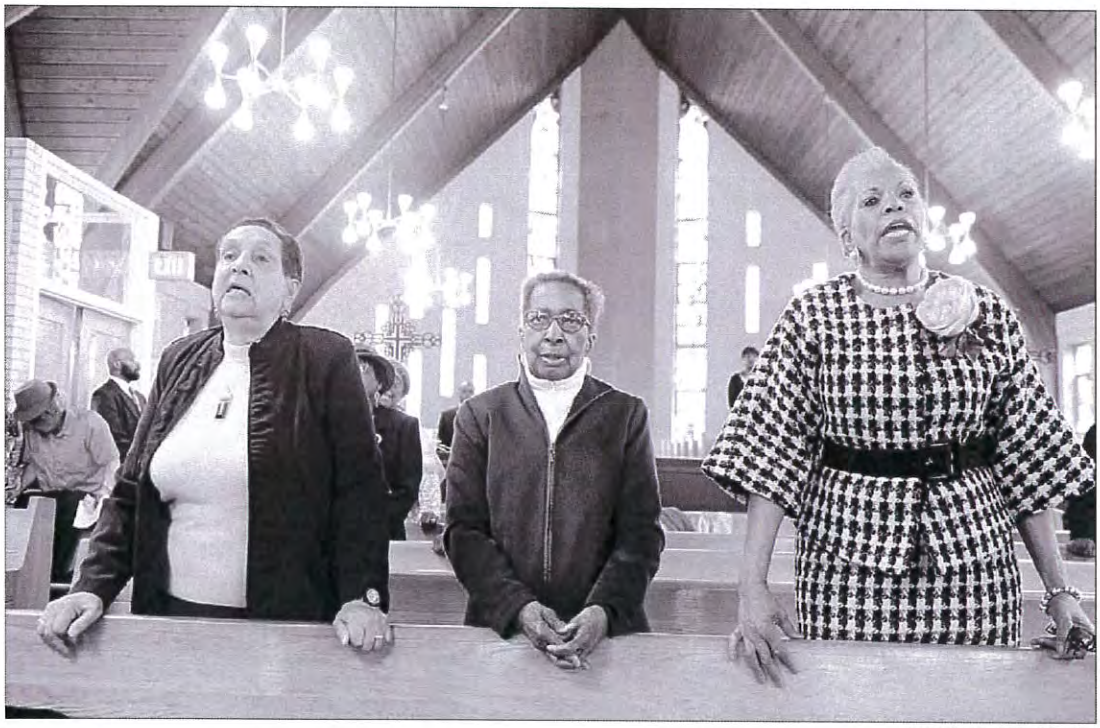
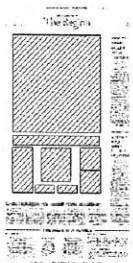


Robin Rombach/Post-Gazette

Katie Johnson, center, 91, attends church at Bethel AME in the Hill District with her friends Velma Croom-Green, left, and Janice Brown. Ms. Johnson's sister, Thelma Witherspoon, died in a fire in January that also destroyed Ms. Johnson's home of 72 years.

A COMMUNITY RISES UP AMID TRAGEDY



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In January, Katie Johnson lost her home and older sister to fire. Since then, her neighbors in the Hill District — a neighborhood where she has long been a pillar of the community — have been doing their part to lift and heal her spirit.

By Richard Webner
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

During the 72 years she lived in her Hill District home, Katie Johnson helped win civil rights for Pittsburgh's black community. She had a successful career as a manager at the Port Authority of Allegheny County. She got married and raised a son. She took care of her mother in her old age, and she grew old herself.

Then, in one afternoon, a fire destroyed it.

On Jan. 29, Ms. Johnson, 91, watched her Shawnee Street home disappear behind torrents of smoke. But all she could think of was her sister, Thelma Witherspoon, who lived next door, where the fire started.

"Where's my sister?" she kept asking friends and firefighters. "Where's my sister?"

At first, Ms. Johnson held out hope that Ms. Witherspoon, who was 95, made it out before the fire started. She just couldn't imagine life without her. She was her best friend, her spiritual adviser. She was the last of her seven siblings still alive.

But as the fire grew, Ms. Witherspoon's safety became more doubtful. Flames were gushing out of her bedroom window, and she was nowhere to be found.

Finally, her sister's home collapsed, leaving only the chimney standing. Her own roof caved in before firefighters quelled the blaze.

Her friends sat her on a neighbor's couch, worried about her health. She wore a blank expression and said almost nothing while thoughts swirled in her head. It felt like a big part of her life had ended.

But her friends were already gathering around her, watching over her, fortifying her against the loss. In the weeks to come, the community she had given so much to would help her get back on her feet.

Hill District leader

Ms. Johnson was 19 when she bought the three-story brick home, working two jobs to save up for the down payment of a couple hundred dollars.

Sheltered from the street by a grassy slope, it seemed like a good place for her and her mother to plant roots in Pittsburgh.

"I always wanted to buy [my mother] a house on top of a hill," Ms. Johnson said. "When I saw that

SEE **COMMUNITY,** PAGE A-10

house, I knew it was the one."

Born in Bainbridge, Ga., Ms. Johnson settled in the Hill District in 1936 at age 13, following her siblings who came in search of work. The Bethel AME Church became the center of her social and spiritual life, a place it still occupies today.

Before long, Ms. Johnson was a prominent member of Pittsburgh's black community. As office manager at the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, a civil rights organization, she lobbied to improve conditions for factory workers and tried to dissuade whites from fleeing when blacks moved into neighborhoods.

In the 1940s, she and other women at the Urban League staged sit-ins to integrate a popular restaurant Downtown. The cooks made a show of spitting in their food, but they ate around it.

"We would try to be smart enough to see where they were spitting," Ms. Johnson said. "Our objective was to make it a place blacks could go, and we wouldn't let something like that stop us."

She later became the first black female manager at the Port Authority of Allegheny County. There, she confronted the problem of youngsters mistreating bus drivers. Her idea was to have drivers talk with students about their jobs.

"The kids get on the bus and think, 'This is a guy who takes me where I want to go.' They wouldn't see him as a real person," she said. After getting to know the drivers, they treated them with respect.

With her career success and dignified bearing, Ms. Johnson was a role model to girls in the Hill District, said Janet Moyo, a longtime friend. When Ms. Moyo attended Bethel AME as a child, she grew attached to Ms. Johnson and came to see her as a mentor. Later, she asked her to direct her wedding.

"She made the girls feel they were somebody," Ms. Moyo said. "She had the class and the sophistication, and we all looked up to her."

Community support

The evening of the fire, Ms. Johnson was exhausted — physically, emotionally and spiritually. In her struggle to understand the tragedy, she wondered if God had left her.

Then, Ms. Moyo invited her to stay with her in Gibsonia. Ms. Johnson started to feel better after she arrived at the pillared home on a spacious country lot.

"I felt like God had left me at that point, until I got here," Ms. Johnson said while sitting in Ms. Moyo's dining room. "I realized God hadn't forsaken me. I still don't know why [it happened], and I may never. But God couldn't have connected me with better people."

Ms. Johnson is enjoying her stay in Gibsonia, but she sometimes bickers with Ms. Moyo and her twin sister, Janice Brown, who visits often. She insists on doing things by herself, such as crossing a busy street and carrying a heavy breakfast tray down the stairs. The sisters worry that she strains herself — she suffered a stroke in 2008, and a heart attack last year left her with stents in her arteries — but it isn't her nature to be passive.

"She's tireless and always

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