

ALC Daily

SATURDAY

Official Daily Newspaper of the CBCF Annual Legislative Conference



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CBCF Announces Phoenix Awards Honorees, Keynote Speaker

BY CHRISTOPHER 'CJ' EPPS

The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc. (CBCF) will host the Phoenix Awards Dinner during the 47th Annual Legislative Conference (ALC). Scheduled to take place tonight from 6:00 PM to 9:30 PM at the Walter E. Washington Conven-

tion Center in Washington, D.C., the Phoenix Awards Dinner is the apex of the ALC. This year's keynote speaker will be Michael Eric Dyson, Ph.D.

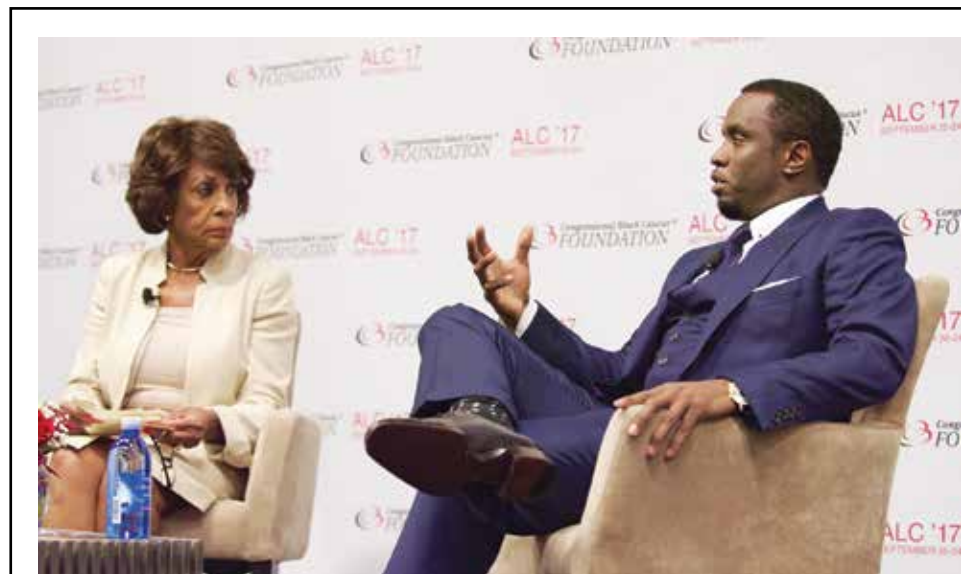
As a highly sought after speaker, Dyson has authored and/or edited 18 books and appeared as a commentator on CNN, MSNBC and countless other media outlets.

Currently a professor at Georgetown University, he has taught at several notable universities across the country throughout his career.

The evening's co-emcees will be Emmy and Golden Globe nominated actor Anthony Anderson and White House correspondent and political analyst April Ryan. The signature black-tie event will pay homage to African Americans who have made substantial contributions to strengthening black communities across the world. Honorary co-chairs of this year's conference are U.S. Representatives Robin Kelly and Marc Veasey.

"The culminating Phoenix Awards Dinner is a special occasion that honors diligent leaders in our community and encourages other leaders to do the work necessary for the betterment of black lives around the globe," said Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, CBCF Board Chair. "As we find ourselves in unparalleled times, it is critical that we come together and uplift each

Please see "PHOENIX AWARDS" on page 8



Congresswoman Maxine Waters interviews Sean "Diddy" Combs during Friday's Financial Services Braintrust.

Access, Affordability Issues in Water Explored

BY MARC BANKS

Congressman James Clyburn opened Friday's session, "Water: Access, Opportunity, and Environmental Sustainability in the Global Black Community," detailing a meeting he had with professors.

The professors shared with Rep. Clyburn, that life expectancy had increased by 20 years over

the last half century—largely due to improvements in the quality of drinking water.

"Water not just as a resource to improve communities, not just water that's safe to drink for tomorrow, but for what water does for life expectancy," Rep. Clyburn said. "I left Flint (Michigan) weeping, not because of what those folks did to the community, but what they did to children. They

sentenced children to a lifetime of illness, a lifetime of many of them never developing as much brain tissue as they need to."

Moderator Julianne Malveaux, Ph.D., noted the international aspect of the problems of clean water. "It's something we're not paying enough attention to. If you go to the African continent, women

Please see "WATER" on page 13



Panelists discuss the need for safe drinking water across the U.S. during the Friday session "Water: Access, Opportunity, and Environmental Sustainability in the Global Black Community."



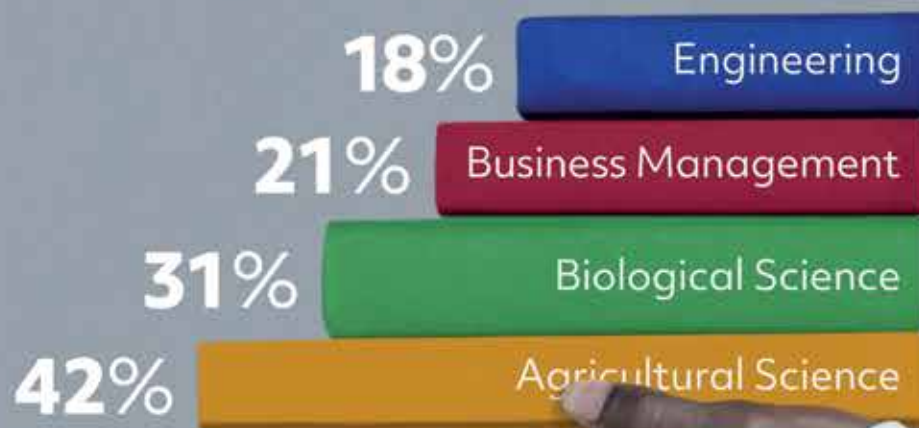
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Seeking A Shorter Route to Equity in Transportation

By MURIEL COOPER

There are more opportunities for transportation than ever before, but minority communities still lack equal access when it comes to getting from Point A to Point B, according to statistics. At the Friday morning panel, “Transportation, Equity, and Access in a New Era,” a group of transportation experts came together to talk about the ways in which transportation can open doors for vulnerable communities, and about the roadblocks that continue to impede that goal.

Victor Anger, Vice President of Agency and Sales, State Farm Insurance, acknowledged the importance linking transportation and equity in his opening remarks, noting that such issues are “fore-front in policy discussions locally and nationally.”

It was noted that the infrastructure of cities is often no accident. Also, the layout of cities is frequently rooted in discriminatory policies and practices. According to statistics, minority communities are faced with the consequences of poor city planning and segregation. That means they also bear some of the greatest burden in accessing transportation.

“You can tell the economic value of a community based on the roads, the infrastructure, and where the highways are placed,”



Panelists discuss the infrastructure of cities and the need to ensure that everyone can access them equally.

said Stephanie Gidigbi, SPARCC Policy, Capacity, and Systems Change Director and Senior Adviser for Urban Solutions at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Generally, when infrastructure is subpar, people may suffer in multiple ways. “Transportation affects our economic and social opportunities,” said moderator Richard Ezike, Ph.D., Mobility and Equity Kendall Fellow at Union of Concerned Scientists. “It can open up, or hinder access to jobs, healthcare and other essential needs.”

Charles Brown, M.P.A., Senior Researcher at the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, and Adjunct Professor at Rutgers University, pointed to the existence of systemic discrimination in relation to transportation, such as race,

class and politics, all of which result in fewer opportunities for people. “I think the biggest thing that’s missing from this is the historical aspect of how this came to be,” said Brown.

As African Americans and other minorities are being priced out of the communities where they have resided for generations, they are being forced further out into the suburbs, explained James Garland, Lead Transportation Specialist for the Federal Highway Administration. But, that also furthers inequality, as commute time heavily influences whether families can overcome poverty,” he said.

Malcolm Glenn, Strategic Partnerships Manager at Uber, says he experienced this firsthand when he lived in San Francisco. He saw families who had lived in

their homes for generations being priced out. He discussed how Uber has been able to provide some transportation solutions in the absence of investments in infrastructure, such as serving as a complement to public transportation, and offering low-cost Uber pool rides.

According to Glenn, when transportation innovations are being developed, underserved communities must be represented. Self-driving cars are one example of a transportation innovation that could be life-changing, but would not reach all people equally. “We have to be exceedingly thoughtful about the ways we roll out this technology,” Glenn said.

Panelists also discussed the problems that lie in political rep-

Please see “TRANSPORTATION” on page 6

Science, Technology Braintrust Blasts into the Future

By MARC BANKS

In the 25 years that Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson has been hosting the Science and Technology Braintrust, much about technology has changed.

But the half-day session,

“Glancing Towards the Future: To Technology and Beyond,” was focused more on the future than the past. Most of the attendees were secondary school students from local institutions. Moderator Reagan Flowers, Ph.D., called them “the masterminds of our

future.”

She noted how this year has been filled with opportunities to learn more about science. “We’ve experienced our total eclipse. It’s been interesting in terms of living in a time when you can experience that, and when there’s a lot going on in our world with natural disasters. We’re going to be looking to you guys to find ways to help secure our future when it comes to dealing with natural disasters.”

High-Tech Inspiration

The first panel discussion, “Reaching for the Stars,” featured tech professionals from companies that students recognized.

Regina Wallace-Jones, Chief of Staff and Head of Product Operations at eBay, Inc., shared how technology had changed significantly since the time she was in college. “When I was coming through college, we were making a shift to the commercial internet. I’m so excited to see the people in this room getting what I didn’t get

until I was 18.”

Nicole Isaac, Head of U.S. Public Policy, LinkedIn, came into the industry as a trained lawyer and after a stint in the Obama administration. “I am very much a latecomer to tech. I don’t do the engineering or the coding, but I am working to change lives.”

Telisa Toliver, Vice President, Business Development & Commercial, Chevron Pipe Line Company, discussed the breadth of careers available that use science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills. She also urged students to take advantage of internship opportunities. “I came from a small town, not knowing what opportunities were really available, so I had to take a lot of leaps of faith.”

Matthew Nelson, Chair of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), suggested that no matter what career is selected,

Please see “SCIENCE” on page 12



Students enthusiastically try to answer questions during the Science and Technology Braintrust.



Exhibit Showcase Promotes Economic Development, Prosperity

BY MARC BANKS

The Annual Legislative Conference Exhibit Showcase kicked off with a bang Thursday afternoon, as members of the Dr. Henry A. Wise Junior High School from Upper Marlboro, Maryland, welcomed guests to the massive exhibit hall. The fanfare and ribbon-cutting set the mood for the high-energy event, featuring a wide range of exhibitors promoting health, education and prosperity for African Americans.

Congressman Bobby Rush took the main stage to host a panel on franchising, discussing his own dedication to economic prosperity for African Americans. "I spent most of my life fighting for the economic empowerment of my community," he said, from his membership in the Black Panther Party to his work in elected office. "I've always fought to bring wealth and opportunity to the African-American community." Miriam L. Brewer, C.F.E., Senior Director of Education and Diversity for the International Franchise Association/ Franchise Education and Research Foundation, moderated the panel and discussed how African Americans could benefit from franchis-

The Exhibit Showcase
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ing. She was joined by former NFL player Tyoka Jackson, founder of The Jackson Investment Company, LLC; Smoothie King franchise owner Tonya Bringham; and FAST-SIGNS Chief Executive Officer Howard James. Representatives from companies including McDonald's, Yum! and Choice Hotels were also in the exhibit hall to talk to attendees about starting their own franchises.

Franchising was far from the only economic opportunity considered during the Exhibit Showcase. Authors also made a big splash at the event, and several brought their books and chatted with attendees. Dozens of books by and for African Americans were available for sale from the Author Showcase. Panels rotated throughout the afternoon with new authors who discussed economic opportunities and their own paths to success.

Health and wellness was also front and center in the Exhibit Showcase. The Health Pavilion



Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (second from left) and Rep. Robin Kelly (second from right) cut the ribbon to officially open the Exhibit Showcase.

offered attendees both information and screenings. Attendees could learn about services offered through various organizations, or learn about health issues related to cancer, neurology and stress. Medical experts were on hand to answer health questions. Screenings for HIV, podiatry issues, sleep apnea and vision were available on the spot. Those who needed

a break from the endless array of exhibitors could kick back in the Glam Lounge, with hair, makeup and spa services available right in the exhibit hall. Attendees were also able to show off their new looks in the Professional Image Studio and receive a professional headshot.

Please see "SHOWCASE" on page 14



Owning Our Power

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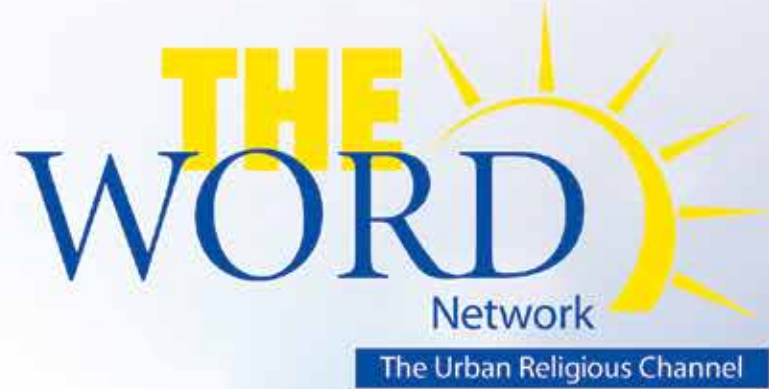
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LIVE EVENTS

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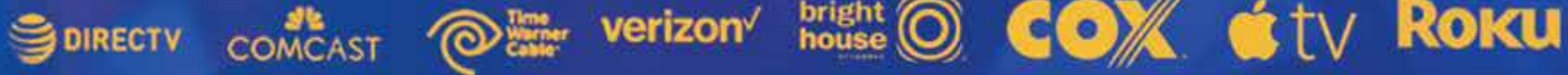
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Criminal Justice Reform Requires Data, Resources, Youth Involvement

BY CHRISTOPHER 'CJ' EPPS

Phillip Goff, Ph.D., in attempting to moderate a Friday morning Judiciary Brain-trust on “Criminal Justice Reform: Making America Accountable for Black Lives” admitted that he didn’t even know where to start.

It wasn’t just the dangerous environment of some city streets, he noted; it was the dangerous way leaders recently have begun talking about crime. He called out U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions in particular, “rolling back every piece of evidence-based learning that we have made, every stride of progress we have made, to get smarter on crime.” Goff is President and Co-Founder of the Center for Policing Equity, an organization that has been developing a National Justice Database to track police behavior, including stops and use of force, helping standardize data collection across many of the country’s police departments. He’s a big fan of data, noting that “Sometimes the things we all know, those things are wrong, too.” An example: He has learned that youth being contacted by law enforcement increases crime, not the other way around.

The panel included Bill Cobb, Deputy Director of the ACLU’s Campaign for Smart Justice, a man who also spent more than six years in prison; seasoned civil rights litigator Charles Coleman Jr.; the Right Honourable David

Lammy, Member of Parliament for Tottenham, North London; and Clarence E. Cox, III, President of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE). Also present in the room was Congressman John Conyers.

Lammy began by sharing statistics from other parts of the world, where the challenges of over-representation of blacks in the criminal justice system is as bad as — or worse — than in the U.S.

The pipeline is a fundamental problem, he said. “In the U.K., we describe it as the youth justice system. We need to be wary of the phrase ‘youth.’ It’s a euphemism for ‘black.’ The real word is ‘children.’ In the U.K., children as young as 10, 11, 12 can be in the youth prison estate.”

Lammy is concerned, he said, about the disparities in the way spaces are policed; a student who smokes marijuana on an Ivy League school campus might even find a professor to join in, but one who uses the drug in another neighborhood will see a criminal response.

He also is concerned about disparities in the way trauma is treated—including the trauma that comes from seeing violence.

“There are big issues about supporting that,” he said. “We see learning difficulties like dyslexia and ADHD. When one group of children has ADHD, there’s medi-



Attendees learn about disparities during “Criminal Justice Reform: Making America Accountable for Black Lives.”

cation. With another group of children, there’s a criminal justice response to ADHD. Then, when you get to prison, the whole point of prison is not just to punish, but to rehabilitate. So where is the education? Where is the support with your learning difficulty? Where is the support with your trauma and counseling? If my white colleague self-harms, he gets support, and there is therapy to help him. If I punch the wall, I’m self-harming. I’m angry. And I get put in segregation.”

On a larger scale, he said, after people have been released, other problems exist. A community in which a significant proportion of men have criminal records becomes an area of mass unem-

ployment, because no one will hire them.

Coleman, meanwhile, said it was important to view the overall issue “within the lens of anti-blackness.” It is a global phenomenon, and one that has been in place for centuries,” he said. “We have reached the point in this nation where we have criminalized blackness. We have weaponized poverty, and we continue to engage oppressive systems without being able to clearly identify them for what they are and the damage that they do. It is an imperative for each and every one of us to use our voices to normalize the discussion around calling out white

Please see “CRIMINAL JUSTICE” on page 15

Transportation

Continued from page 3

resentation and who gets to make decisions regarding transportation in communities. Randall “Keith” Benjamin, Director of the Charleston, South Carolina, Department of Traffic and Transportation, talked about the pressures of taking over a position as an African-American man in a historically segregated city. He noted that he sees the same people over and over at local government meetings.

Public engagement is key to bringing in a more diverse range of voices, Veronica Davis, Co-Founder of Nspiregreen noted. “It’s making sure that people understand what you’re asking them and then making sure you’re actually taking their feedback to inform the planning policy, whatever it is,” she said. “It also means building genuine relationships with communities, not simply increasing gentrification,” she added.

Panelists noted there are two aspects to data: the quantitative

side and the qualitative side. But, they commented, it’s the latter that is not getting adequate attention.

“The qualitative piece is captured through public engagement, community outreach, and that’s where we’re not spending the time capturing the experiences of our people and raising their voices up,” Brown said.

Garland likened the lack of representation in discussions about transportation to the Solange album *A Seat at the Table*. One need not have an advanced degree or be a transportation expert to be involved in these conversations, he noted.

“How are we managing these disruptors? How are we staying ahead of the curve? How can we manage to have a seat at the table?” he asked.

“As we sit on this panel to have this discussion, I’m really hoping this encourages you to think about your own community and what you may be able to do to change the dialogue and ensure that you are all able to thrive,” Gidigbi said.



Thursday’s Gospel Extravaganza featured some of the South’s most acclaimed gospel choirs lifting their voices in celebration.





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The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc. (CBCF) and the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Spouses recognized three individuals for their substantial contributions in the arts at the Celebration of Leadership in the Fine Arts. Spike Lee was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his innovative contributions to the arts. Yolanda Adams received the Lifetime Achievement Award in social justice, and Simone Paulwell received the Trendsetter Award for her rising career in the fine arts.

Pictured (from left to right) are Simone-Marie Meeks, Tichina Arnold, Yolanda Adams, Simone Paulwell, Karmen Brown, Tonya Lewis Lee and Spike Lee.

Phoenix Awards

Continued from page 1

other through celebration and collaboration. During our ALC presentations, and especially at the Phoenix Awards Dinner, we do just that."

"Our honorees have proven themselves to be unwavering in their commitment to answering the call of public service, leadership and activism," said A. Shuanise Washington, President and CEO of the CBCF. "Along with our honorees, our keynote speaker, Mr. Michael Eric Dyson, personifies this year's theme, 'And Still I Rise.' Through his ability to overcome obstacles, empower urban communities and raise the sentience of the black community in the United States and abroad, he carries forth the banner every day."

The Phoenix Award is the CBCF's highest honor, presented to individuals whose extraordinary achievements strengthen communities and improve the lives of individuals, families and communities, nationally and globally.

This year's distinguished honorees are as follows:

- **Dr. Thomas Freeman** will receive the **CBCF Chair's Phoenix Award** in recognition of his profound influence on our nation as a legendary educator and prolific scholar, and for his longstanding commitment to improving the quality of life for black students

that will leave a significant and lasting impression for generations to come.

- **Ruby Bridges** will receive the **CBC Chair Phoenix Award** for her fearless leadership and willingness to confront segregation head on in the New Orleans school system.

- **Ambassador Ron Kirk** will receive the **ALC Co-Chair's Phoenix Award** for his outstanding contributions to the enhancement of improved relations in foreign affairs and for his belief that trade is the strongest key to unlocking jobs and growth for the American economy and global prosperity.

- **Tamika D. Mallory** will receive the **ALC Co-Chair's Phoenix Award** in recognition of her exemplary leadership and profound impact on social justice and civil rights advocacy.

- **Congressman Bennie G. Thompson** will receive the **Harold Washington Phoenix Award** in recognition of his immeasurable contributions to African-American political awareness, empowerment and advancement of minorities in the electoral process.

The Phoenix Awards Dinner showcases the CBCF's education and leadership programs, and provides an opportunity to recognize outstanding individuals who make humanitarian contributions to society. To purchase tickets to the dinner and to register for the ALC, visit cbcfinc.org/alc.

Panel Calls for Intersectionality in Resistance Movements

BY MURIEL COOPER

To ensure a successful movement of resistance against a hostile sociopolitical climate, it is important to take an intersectional approach to activism, a group of panelists rooted in social justice said in a Friday session.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee opened "The Resistance: An Intersectional Strategy Session" by thanking the panelists "for continuing with the resistance," and for their dedication to intersectionality.

"We're talking about intersectionality and these are individuals who understand it, who get it, who know the power of intersectionality," she said. Now more than ever, there is a need to make those connections among people who face different forms of discrimination, which is at the heart of intersectional organizing, she surmised.

"It's just a moment for us to come together and really realize and understand our collective power. It's our collective power that's not only going to resist what's taking place, but it's going to help us move forward with the progressive agenda that speaks to the aspirations of everyone," said Rep. Lee.

Moderator Angela Rye, former Executive Director and General Counsel to the Congressional Black Caucus and founder of IMPACT Strategies, echoed those sentiments in her introduction. Rye thanked the panelists, whom she noted have been resisting injustice long before such calls to action became commonplace. She also called out audience members—including journalist Melissa

Harris-Perry—for their role in resistance efforts.

Women's March on Washington National Co-Chairs Tamika D. Mallory and Linda Sarsour spoke about the power of intersectionality in making the event possible, and how intersectionality continues to anchor its movement. "The term intersectionality is what took us over, that's what got us through," Mallory said, noting that mobilizing 5 million people to march around the world wouldn't have happened without acknowledging intersectionality.

The Women's March may be over, but the work is far from done, as Sarsour explained. "How do we continue to use our platform to shine light on the work that has been happening way before there was a Women's March?" she asked. In pushing those narratives forward, the Women's March will be holding the Inaugural Women's Convention in Detroit this fall. There, people will take part in skills-based workshops that will not only allow them to walk away with tools to enact change in their communities, but also to work on a personal level with those facing oppression, she explained.

Alicia Garza, Co-Founder of Black Lives Matter and Special Projects Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, spoke about the work that needs to be done to ensure that African Americans and other minority groups are empowered in political office, as well as in their own communities. Representation in political office is important, she noted, but so is fighting for change on a grassroots level.

Please see "INTERSECTIONALITY" on page 15



Attendees take in the sounds of Thursday's Jazz Concert.



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Preventative Strategies Take on Many Forms

By MURIEL COOPER

It takes a holistic approach to solve the problems of juvenile incarceration, from exploring alternative approaches to building stronger communities. And everyone has a part to play—including following through when asked to serve on a jury.

“That’s one of the parts of the criminal justice system that we have to participate in,” Rep. Bobby Scott said at the Thursday session, “Preventative Strategies for Black Youth in the Juvenile Justice System.” If you don’t like what the jury did, you can’t complain if all of us are backing out.”

The panel, moderated by Judge Greg Mathis, included Jason Johnson, Professor at Morgan State University and Politics Editor at TheRoot.com; criminal defense attorney Yodit Tewolde; Louisiana State Representative Ted James; and Rep. Val Demings, who served as Police Chief in Orlando, Florida, for 24 years before being elected to Congress.

“This is a critical topic,” Rep. Demings said. “As a mother of three black sons, our future is in jeopardy without them. When I look in this room and I see the young men—I’m partial because I have three sons—when I see their hopes and dreams, we’ve got to do something. We have a nation worth saving.”

Rep. Demings shared how she had been a social worker before she became a police officer. “When I was first sworn in, my training sergeant said, ‘Let me tell you right now: Police work is nothing like social work.’ Because

“We don’t have enough black attorneys, defense attorneys advocating for these kids, black prosecutors who had discretion. I saw cases that came to my desk because of adolescent behavior being criminalized. I had the leeway to not prosecute.”
— Yodit Tewolde

I was new and had been warned to keep my mouth shut, I didn’t say anything. But after six months on the street, I realized, if you’re doing the job of law enforcement right, police work is a heck of a lot like social work.”

Rep. Demings noted that this discussion should focus on “young people who make mistakes. There are a lot of good children who just get pushed down the wrong road and they’re vulnerable. They come from good families and they’re lured to do bad things. Those children are the ones that we’re here to talk about today, who deserve to have a second chance. Incarceration is not the answer necessarily for those kids.”

She talked about 17 children charged as adults incarcerated in Orlando—the community she served as a police officer. “These children have been waived over to adult court because they have committed serious violent felonies. All of them come from single parent homes. All of them are undereducated. Either they dropped out of school, or their attendance was leading to that direction. And all of them come from poverty-



Yodit Tewolde and Ted James discuss strategies to keep juveniles out of the criminal justice system.

stricken areas. We can talk about the criminal justice system. I know a whole lot of good police officers and I know there are some bad ones as well. They don’t get a pass or they shouldn’t. But society shouldn’t get a pass either when the education system fails our children, when the process somehow leaves our children out.”

She said that in 1965, a presidential commission explored issues related to policing in America. Their recommendations were to hire the best and brightest, to ensure the best training and equipment. “But we also have to look at unemployment, lack of housing, undereducated or not educated, poverty-stricken areas,” Rep. Demings said. “Here we are talking about the same issues. Police don’t get a pass, but neither should anybody else.”

Shining a Light

Johnson noted that one of the

important roles played by media is to bring attention to issues related to criminal justice. “My role in these discussions is to be the Bat-Signal in the sky that tells our community where we need to focus our time and energy. Above and beyond the problems that we have sometimes with the behavior of police officers, with white supremacy and with an attorney general who wants to exterminate as many people as he can, at many times, our community doesn’t know. It was journalists who brought to our attention what happened with Tamir Rice, with Mike Brown.”

He told the story of Leon Ford Jr., a young man shot by police. Ford survived, but was charged with assault since the vehicle moved forward during the incident. He was found not guilty and his civil suit against the police

Please see “PREVENTATIVE” on page 14

Policing Overhaul Needed to Protects Black Men and Boys

By MARC BANKS

Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton and Congresswoman Frederica Wilson co-sponsored a panel Friday afternoon about the dangers black men and boys face in encounters with police. Moderated by *Washington Post* journalist Jonathan Capehart, the session featured Angela J. Davis, JD, Professor of Law at American University; Cedric Alexander, Ph.D., Deputy Mayor of Rochester, New York; Paul Butler, J.D., Professor of Law at Georgetown University; and Raymond Hart, PhD, Director of Research for the Council of the Great City Schools.

“It is impossible to avoid the systematic shooting of unarmed black men by police officers in the streets of America today,” Rep. Norton said during the braintrust, “Policing Black Men and Boys: Are the Odds Against Them?” She said, “The risk to life has elevated these shootings to our most serious form of inequality.”

The panelists discussed how violence committed by law enforcement against black men and boys stems from systematic racism; black men and boys are regularly perceived as criminals, and police perpetuate these stereotypes. Davis pointed to research showing the disproportionate killings and arrests of black men and boys by

law enforcement, and laws that allow discrimination to continue to thrive. Panelists contributed their own anecdotes about incidences of racist policing and also discussed high-profile killings of black men and boys, such as Freddie Gray and Tamir Rice.


The problem of racist policing was brought front and center when Rep. Wilson’s son Paul Wilson discussed a recent police encounter, during which he was racially profiled.


“I truly think it’s more than just training,” Alexander said. “Policing needs a cultural shift; a huge cultural shift, and that is from someone who has policed across this country and still consults with a number of police chiefs across this country.”



Angela J. Davis



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The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc. (CBCF) and the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) partnered to present the popular General Session Luncheon on Thursday. Panelists shared their experiences as seasoned wordsmiths who battle to share facts and override stereotypes as they define and uphold the Fourth Estate.



Left - Audience members listen to panelists share their experiences. Above - Francesca Chambers (right) contributes to the discussion as Armstrong Williams looks on.

Science

Continued from page 3

everyone is an engineer. “You have the ability to engineer your life, no matter what it may be. Don’t look at your life as something that happens to you. Use those skills of math and science to create what you want out of life.”

Kim Martin, Technical Lead/Software Engineer, Google/YouTube, was in college when a computer programming professor suggested she switch majors. It was the first time she thought about a career in the field. “I grew up not knowing what computer science was. I didn’t know what careers there were.”

Much of the panel was devoted to answering the students’ questions, which ranged from how natural resources are stewarded to how technology is impacting relationships.

Out-of-This-World Goals

The second half of the brain-trust included a panel of experts who work in space, whether for NASA or private contractors. Part of their job was to open up students to the many possibilities that space offers, realizing that for many, the concept is foreign.

“Space wasn’t something talked about much in my community,” said Ayana Reese, Engineering Specialist, Jacobs Engineering. “I never thought I’d be engaged in helping NASA with missions.”

Vanessa Wyche, Director, Exploration Integration and Science, NASA/Johnson Space Center, discussed current projects that plan for humans to go the moon and then to Mars. She also works with astronauts on space walks. “We eventually want to get to Mars. NASA has technologies that we’re

“You have the ability to engineer your life, no matter what it may be. Don’t look at your life as something that happens to you. Use those skills of math and science to create what you want out of life.”

– Matthew Nelson

developing to get there.”

Working with NASA requires significant education, and most of the panelists had numerous degrees. “That is how success starts,” said Robert Curbeam, Deputy and VP of Space Systems, Raytheon Space and Airborne Systems and a former NASA astronaut. “Education is never time wasted. What it meant for me—even though my end goal, what I wanted to be, whether a cowboy as a 4-year-old, to the time I was 20 years old when I decided I wanted to be an astronaut—education is what made me ready.”

Rick Mastracchio, Senior Director, Advanced Programs, Orbital ATK, and a former NASA astronaut, urged students to find a path that they loved. “It’s hard work. Education takes time and effort, but if you find something you like, it’s not hard work. Get an education in it. Find a job. It will take you places.”

Chris Hearsey, Director, Bigelow Aerospace, said perseverance is required; so are connections. He recommended students explore internships. “The commercial space industry is a really hard field to break into. You have to get close to it for people to know you are.” No matter the field of interest, “there’s always a route to space,” he said.

Victor Glover, current NASA Astronaut, said he loves “being able to share what I do with you is one of my favorite parts of this job.”

Crystal Bonds, Principal of High School for Math, Science, and Technology at the City College of New York, shared how she had wanted to be involved in science, but was told it wasn’t for her. Now, she is a principal at one

of the top STEM high schools in the country. “I dedicate my life to finding people like you to say, it’s not a specific archetype of what you look like to get into science and math.”

As with the previous panel, students lined up to ask thoughtful questions, ranging from how they made important decisions to who inspired them.



Spencer Overton (center) makes a point about the need for all communities to benefit from technological advances while N.Y. Sen. Kevin D. Parker and Marie Sylla-Dixon listen.

Smart Cities and Smarter Components

As the country moves toward more smart technologies, it is essential to ensure that the opportunities it creates are shared by communities of color. That was the topic of the Friday session, “Smart Cities and You: The Future Is Here. Don’t Get Left Behind.”

Through technology, lighting automatically raises or lowers its gleam based on the outside weather. Data can allow the sharing of information between public and private uses. Cars can arrive on an as-needed basis. The panel discussion was organized by Rep. Yvette D. Clarke and moderated by Columbia S.C. Mayor Stephen Benjamin.

New York Senator Kevin D. Parker provided special remarks. Panelists included Spencer Overton of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; Marie Sylla-Dixon of T-Mobile; Darren Parks of Samsung Electronics America; David Owens, recently retired from Edison Electric Institute; and David Albritton of General Motors. The event also included comments from Colette Honorable, formerly with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and now with Reed Smith LLP.

– Muriel Cooper



Panel Shows Link Between Census, Voting Suppression

By MARC BANKS

In a dual panel discussion Thursday afternoon, the Honorable A. Leon Higginbotham Memorial Voting Rights Braintrust took on two issues that often go ignored, but are critically important to African-American communities in particular: voter suppression and the Census. As the conversation progressed, it became clear that threats to voting rights and the outcome of the Census are not only urgent matters to address, but also inextricably linked.

Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge opened the panel, noting the theme for this year: “A Different World: Exerting Power to Effect Change.”

“There are few things more sacred in our democracy than the right to vote, yet voting rights are constantly under attack as states across the country pass voter suppression laws,” she said, leading into the first panel.

Moderator Jonathan Capehart, journalist for The Washington Post and contributor for MSNBC, kicked off the discussion by asking panelists their thoughts on President Donald Trump’s voting commission. The panelists agreed that the commission is indicative of voting suppression and that it seeks to target a problem that doesn’t exist. Impediments to vot-



Participating in the legislative process requires access to voting locations as well as fair and accurate Census counts, according to panelists during the Honorable A. Leon Higginbotham Memorial Voting Rights Braintrust.

ing for minorities are a real issue and should be receiving more attention, they said.

“The commission is indeed a symbol of what is broken in this democracy,” said Nicole Austin-Hillery, Esq., Director and Counsel of The Brennan Center for Justice’s Washington, D.C., office. She pointed to research from her own organization that is oft-repeated when denouncing reports of voter fraud: “You are more likely to be struck by lightning than you are to encounter voter fraud.” Nevertheless, the fallacy is perpetuated through discriminatory voting practices such as long lines and requirements to show identification at voting sites, she said.

Stacey Abrams, candidate for

Georgia Governor, also voiced her concerns with the commission. As the first woman to lead in the Georgia General Assembly and the first African American to lead in the Georgia House, Abrams has a strong passion for the rights of African-American voters. She stressed the importance of “centering campaigns around communities of color,” noting, “if we don’t center campaigns around black communities and brown communities, we are going to continue to lose.”

Derrick Johnson, Interim President and CEO of the NAACP, agreed that voting suppression poses a far greater risk to voting integrity than unfounded fears of voter fraud.

“It is not about voter fraud,” he said. “It is a communication strategy to undermine the integrity of elections in this country as we become a blacker and browner country.”

Johnson echoed Abrams’ call to help minorities become more involved in voting, especially at the state and local levels.

In the second half of the event, a new set of panelists bridged the discussion of suppressed voting rights with the practice of redistricting and its impact on minority communities. Democratic strategist Symone Sanders, who served as the national press secretary for Sen. Bernie Sanders’ presidential

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Water

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spend all day walking to wells and back to bring clean water to their families. We have so many cities that have Flint-like problems. The nation’s poisonous water problem is far worse than any of us think.”

She was joined by Karen Weaver, Mayor of Flint, Michigan; Quentin Stubbs, Ph.D., Senior Research and Policy Analyst, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation; Juliet Ellis, Chief Strategy Officer and Assistant General Manager, External Affairs, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission; Mary Grant, Public Water for All Campaign Director, Food & Water Watch; and Heather McTeer Toney, President and CEO, The Resolutions Firm, and former Regional Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Mayor Weaver noted that in 2017, “we shouldn’t be talking about access to clean water. What happened in Flint should never have happened. If I can help so that it never happens anywhere else, I have a responsibility to do this. Flint is a poster child for lack

of access to clean water and an aging infrastructure, but we know there’s an aging infrastructure across this country. Use us as an example and learn from us.”

Repairs to the water system will be a multi-year project, replacing not just the service lines, but also fixtures in the homes, since lead has corroded those as well, she noted. “In a crisis, we had to make sure the people of Flint were going to benefit. We wanted to make sure that local people could get these jobs of repairing the lead service lines. While we’re not where we want to be or need to be, we have made progress.”

Stubbs talked about the “consequences” of development. “Does environmental justice not occur until gentrification occurs? It boils down to data, education and cooperation. You have to understand what the problem is and what the consequences are,” said Stubbs.

Ellis discussed a coalition of 17 utilities throughout the country that are focused on ensuring a positive impact on the communities in which they operate. That means exploring ways to

create pipelines into civil service. A contract assistance center is working to build up the working capacity of smaller contractors. In San Francisco, contracts require contractors to address community benefits. “We’ve bid over 56 contracts; they have supported STEM programs and internships. The latest contract has put about \$16 million around neighborhood stabilization and affordable housing,” said Ellis. “I feel like there’s so much opportunity at this point and time to do work a totally different way.”

Grant discussed working on an affordability program in cities like Baltimore. “We need to make the improvements to our water system, but that’s causing water prices to go up. Federal funding has fallen 74 percent since 1977. Our water systems are aging. There are cities with declining populations. They just don’t have the capacity for many people to afford their water.”

Studies have shown that affordability programs—with costs capped at 3 percent of income—are revenue neutral, Grant noted. “If people can afford their bills,

they actually pay their bills.” Philadelphia recently adopted a similar program because 40 percent of its customers were behind on their bills, she explained.

McTeer Toney noted the many aspects of water’s impact on a community, including agriculture, tourism and economic developments. “Being a former mayor from the Mississippi Delta, I understand the power of water, but also the respect that you have to have for water. We’ve seen the power of water through hurricanes and understand what it does to move, destruct and rebuild a community.”

She also discussed the role of the EPA in working with states. “When they cut the budget for the EPA, the money going to the state is then cut. Depending upon what state you’re in, that state will then decide what communities get the money. How many of you think that those states will send the money to the communities that really have the problem? If we’re going to talk about really sustaining our communities, we’re going to have to advocate on a whole other level.”



Saturday's Schedule-at-a-Glance



The Prayer Breakfast begins at 7:30 AM today.

7:00 AM - 4:00 PM — Registration/Ticketing Open, *East Salon*

7:30 AM - 10:00 AM — Prayer Breakfast (Ticketed Event), *Hall D*

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM — Exhibit Showcase, *Hall E*

9:00 AM - 1:00 PM — Authors' Pavilion, Exhibit Hall, *Hall E*

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM — Automation: How New Technologies will Impact the Workforce of Color, *143B*

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM — Convicted, Out of Jail, Out of Work, Out of Prison: Re-Entry, *143A*

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM — Empowering Business Development and Economic Inclusion, *209C*

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM — Not for Sistahs Only: From Devastation (2016) to Destination (2018), *140B*

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM — #Speak Up : Addressing the Rise of Hate Crimes on College Campuses, *206*

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM — Faith Leaders Roundtable, *209AB*

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM — NBSLA, *143C*

5:00 PM - 6:00 PM — Pre-Dinner Reception (Invitation Only), *Hall D Concourse*

6:00 PM - 9:30 PM — Phoenix Awards Dinner (Ticketed Event), *Hall D*

Voting

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campaign, moderated the second portion that hinged on the consequences of the 2020 Census.

Kelly Ward, Executive Director of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, explained that district lines are redrawn every year after the Census takes place, shaping people's communities. How many people are counted in the Census heavily influences the outcomes of redistricting.

The Census determines everything from the allocation of federal dollars to political representation, making an accurate count critical. So the fact that so many minori-

ties tend to go undercounted in the Census is extremely harmful to their communities, explained Vanita Gupta, Esq., President and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

She noted that African Americans were undercounted by 800,000 people in the 2010 Census. "I talk about the Census as one of our most pressing civil rights issues," she said. "If our communities are going to be undercounted, it's going to deny our communities a full voice."

Compounding the problem is a lack of adequate funding for the 2020 Census—by about \$200 million, noted John H. Thompson, former Director of the U.S. Cen-

sus Bureau. Not only that, but the Census Bureau also currently lacks a director. As the next wave of the Census is aimed at modernization, sufficient federal funding is all the more necessary.

Furthermore, distrust of the government, and what it might do with Census data, has made historically underrepresented communities wary of being involved in the count, especially with increasing threats of deportation, Ward explained. "It is now harder for community organizers to reassure people that the Census is worth participating in," he suggested.

There are processes in place

to review and challenge Census data, but "they're not a real solution because it's hard to challenge," Thompson said. "The best thing is to advocate for a good Census."

Rep. Fudge closed out the panel noting that she had been hesitant to dedicate an entire panel discussion to the Census, especially during one of the busiest periods of ALC. However, the importance of the Census outweighed any reservations she had about holding the event.

"This affects every single American personally, so it's worth the risk to me," she said.

Showcase

Continued from page 4

Attendees looking to pick up a souvenir had countless choices in the Marketplace Pavilion. Many vendors offered colorful clothing and accessories, taking inspiration from across the African Diaspora. Bath, body and hair care were also popular items sold by vendors. In addition to tailoring vendors for men and women, there was no shortage of homewares, paintings and other art. Attendees could attend their own works of art in the form of wine glasses or painted canvases at the Paint & Sip Design Studio.

Opportunities in higher education and the workforce were another major component of the Exhibit Showcase, with represen-

tatives from numerous companies and organizations, both for-profit and non-profit, onsite to help people determine their next steps. Colleges and universities from across the country were present to speak with potential future students.

"Because it offers an abundance of options, the diversity of the Exhibit Showcase presents a unique opportunity to attendees of ALC," said Ella Brewer, who represented the National Council of Negro Women, Inc., (NCNW) at her booth. She said she was happy to take advantage of networking opportunities with other organizations that wouldn't ordinarily cross her path. "That's what we're all about: networking and bringing people together who normally don't work together," she said.

Preventative

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officers goes to trial next week. "It's only when we pay attention that the criminal justice system comes to slowly move toward the fair treatment that we've all demanded since being brought here."

Finding Solutions

So often, James said, the community solutions rely on church and school. "But the very people that we need to reach aren't in school and they're not going to church on Sundays. We can't be afraid to go into the areas where these kids hang out."

He noted programs in Louisiana that offer incentives for businesses to train and hire young offenders. "We can't be afraid to meet them where they are and we have to open op-

portunities. If we don't offer an opportunity to make a living, they'll go back to what they were doing before."

Tewolde noted the need for more African-American lawyers and prosecutors. During her stint as a criminal prosecutor in Dallas, she moved over to juvenile. "It was probably the best decision I've ever made. I started realizing we're just not around. We don't have enough black attorneys, defense attorneys advocating for these kids, black prosecutors who had discretion. I saw cases that came to my desk because of adolescent behavior being criminalized. I had the leeway to not prosecute."

She now goes to schools to help young people understand "how not to get into the juvenile system. Once you're in there, it won't take you long to get to the adult system."



Intersectionality

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"A lot of the work that we've been doing for the last four years has been about trying to get our movements to understand what actual deep transformative intersectionality looks like, from working to decriminalize African-American communities, to advocating for immigration reform and combating xenophobia. Getting minorities elected to office is one facet of that goal, but so is determining mechanisms for accountability to address how democracy is failing black communities," said Garza.

Rashad Robinson, Executive Director of Color of Change, reiterated Garza's views, saying, "We cannot mistake presence for power. It is crucial to fight for transformational change not just within government," he said. Robinson admitted that some rules may need to change to ensure better outcomes for people who have been oppressed by the political systems in place. "Presence is important, but visibility and awareness, diversity without power, all of those things operate against our ability to actually change the rules," he said.

Resistance also means holding the people around us to higher standards of activism, insisted

Emily Gonzalez Avalos, Executive Director of NAVIGATE MN. "We keep engaging in direct action and sometimes even holding our friends accountable, because this is the time to be the boldest and bravest versions of ourselves," she said.

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, a Professor of Law at Columbia Law School and the University of California, Los Angeles is credited with coining the term "intersectionality." She demonstrated the power of the concept during the session. She asked the audience to raise their hands and keep them up until they heard a name they did not recognize. While the vast majority of audience members recognized the names of African American men killed by police, few hands remained in the air as Crenshaw began calling out the names of African American women killed by police.

"What does it mean that our agendas are not inclusive of the suffering that our black women face?" she asked, noting a "failure to call ourselves a coalition."

"When we think about intersectionality and movements, it's important to think about intersectionality across movements," she said. "We also have to think about intersectionality within our own community."



(Left to right) Bill Cobb, Charles Coleman Jr. and the Right Honourable David Lammy discuss criminal justice reform.

Criminal Justice

Continued from page 6

supremacy, calling out oppressive structures and oppressive systems for what they are."

He also encouraged the audience to be "intentional and deliberate" in involving young people in the civil rights fight—in addition to being willing to get out of their way. Not only do young people have a place at the table, he said, it is their table, and their responsibility to do something with it.

Cobb—whose work includes prosecutorial reform, bail reform, sentencing reform, and parole and release reform—also noted that young people are close to the problem, so they're close to the solution. But they may lack the resources to bring it about. Systemic change can only come

"If my white colleague self-harms, he gets support, and there is therapy to help him. If I punch the wall, I'm self-harming. I'm angry. And I get put in segregation."

— David Lammy

when money and assistance go to those who understand the issues from an inside perspective, he added.

Cox also explained the difference between disruption and protests; one is destructive," he said. They are two different things."

"Protest is great, but our history has shown when we've made economic impact, that's even greater," he said. "We don't have to rewrite the book. Revisit the book."

Forum Offers the Perfect Business Match

BY CHRISTOPHER 'CJ' EPPS

In welcoming attendees to the 7th Annual Meet and Match Forum, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee put Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner on speakerphone, who promised that his city, despite Hurricane Harvey's wrath, is "open for business."

"And today in this room," said Rep. Jackson Lee, "we are open for business." Ongoing recovery in Texas—not to mention Florida, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and other areas impacted by recent storms—will take workers, contracts and economic development, she surmised. "It is much the same that is needed for reducing economic disparities for minority-owned business," she added.

The Friday afternoon forum brought together small businesses with federal government representatives and corporations, and it was standing room only. In addition to being matched with opportunities, participants were encour-

aged to connect with willing experts from the panel. That panel included Jennifer Chronis, General Manager, Department of Defense at Amazon Web Services; Elizabeth El-Nattar, CEO, TRI-COR Industries; Mary Haley, Ph.D., Director of Small Business, Air Force Life Cycle Management Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base; Teresa Macalooloo, Owner, Macalogic; Gloria Pualani, Corporate Director, SEBP/Government Relations at Northrop Grumman; and Emmett Vaughn, Director, Office of Diverse Business Empowerment for Exelon Corp. Each spoke about their unique offerings, and some gave pointed advice. Haley, for example, encouraged the group to be prepared, be professional, take advantage of resources, be assertive, and be persistent.

Tommy L. Marks, Director, Office of Small Business Programs, U.S. Department of the Army, attended the forum with a colleague; it was the first time his office had received an invitation to take part, and



The 7th Annual Meet and Match Forum brought together small businesses with federal government representatives and corporations.

they were happy to accept. From what he understands, he said, the Meet and Match is "the place to be to meet small vendors."

"Our hope is that vendors will come by and be interested in what the Army has to offer," he said. "We need folks in all areas: equipment, medical, construction, cyber, we have needs across all enterprises."

Also during the event, Shah-

nah Holt, Chief Executive at Premier Employment Agency, stood to ask whether anyone in the room would be willing to hire past criminal offenders looking for a second chance. El-Nattar encouraged her to be in touch directly.

"Together, we're much stronger," El-Nattar said. "We should help each other. We should never be scared of each other."

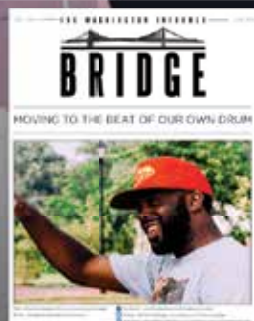
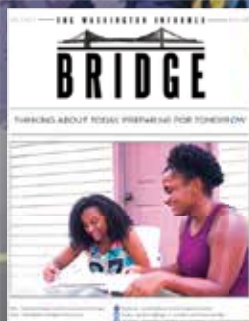


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