

Bronin's State Of The City Address: Implications

By Edgar Johnson

In his recent annual State of the City Address, Mayor Luke Bronin spelled out some of the city's most compelling successful accomplishments, critical gaps since the last address, and summoned residents to come up with soul-searching implications as taxpayers.

Bronin spelled out the underlying vision of the city focus, implementing and sticking to the state-approved five-year plan. "And because of that, we're on track to finish this year not only on budget, but able to set money aside to fund vital future Capital investments and begin rebuilding our reserves," he said.

"We did not accumulate debt. We protected services. We staffed our public safety team. The objective isn't to have a better system for tracking and responding to complaints," Bronin said.

"Our goal is to foster a culture free from harassment in the first place," Bronin added.

Bronin not only called attention to the fast-growing innovation community in Hartford, namely, the digital center established by Stanley Black & Decker, Inc., Upward Hartford, Reset and Makerspace CT, and Infosys, the global information system.

The renovation and development of empty buildings and long-vacant lots deserve high marks. Other development efforts showing visible progress in the neighborhood are projects that had sat gathering dust on the shelf for years, the Albany Avenue Streetscape, Weaver High School, Westbrook Village, and Bowles Park.

Bronin did mention some of the more persistent and deeper challenges the city still faces, including the horrendous and maddening neglect in housing subsidized



Mayor Luke Bronin delivering State of the City Address

by the U.S Department of Housing, and Urban Development that he himself has seen; the chronic school

absenteeism—he said that some 50 percent of Hartford children are chronically absent from school or at

risk of becoming school dropouts. In addition, there are the chronic urban woes, daunting episodes of violence, and hundreds of school-age kids are homeless.

Bronin, who hopes to campaign for another four years, looks forward to continue to sustain Hartford's progress and solicit residents' support.

Certainly, Bronin and his team deserve tremendous congratulations for the city's progress and rejuvenating downtown and its gateway neighborhoods.

For parents, families, and children, all taxpayers, what he said do invoke some tremendous implications. Everyone ought to claim ownership and a sense of belonging; and tell the story of Hartford progress as part of the comeback 'kid.' This becomes critical with the huge

Continued on Page 2

Beyond Black History Month: Three Exceptional Black Women Making History

WASHINGTON, DC: To celebrate the contributions and impacts of African Americans and individuals from the Diaspora, National Geographic sponsored an unprecedented event, featuring three black women who are making tremendous contributions: a writer and National Geographic

explorer, a Documentary Filmmaker and National Geographic Explorer, and a Forensic scientist.

The event took place at the National Geographic Headquarters in Washington, DC with several attendees and spotlights from science, storytelling, spotlights from diverse cultures and experiences that

are vital in the preservations beyond Black History Month! Christian Garland, HR Business Partner at National Geographic, organized the event under the theme: "Exploring How Our Past Informs Our Future."

In his opening remarks at the event, former mayor of DC and National Geographic Board

Member, Tony Williams, said, "In order to have a shared sense of community, we have to know where we came from and where we are now."

First presenter, Tara Roberts, writer and National Geographic Explorer, carries out dives and tells stories about black scuba divers, historians, and archae-

ologists as they search for slave trade shipwrecks around the world.

Asha Stuart, documentary filmmaker and National Geographic Explorer, gave her presentation on rural village voodoo ceremonies in Haiti and acid-attack burn wards in India. Stuart documented the Siddi

Continued on Page 4



From left, Gretchen Johnson with fellow NatGeo Explorers Asha Stuart and Tara Roberts; Organizer Christian Garland and Host/Moderator Greg McGruder.

INDEX

Fundraising Event at WISC to Benefit Scoutmaster Rhoden, Page 5

Eastern Connecticut State University on Nationwide Statistics, African-American College Students Page 6

Digital Imprints: Implication for Voters Page 7

Connecticut-Based Employment Scam Spans Nationwide Page 7

Community Conversations on Drones and Surveillance Technology Page 7

Grappling with Crimes Through Education Page 8

Mayor Bronin

Continued from Page 1

property taxes; homeowners and business owners pay year after year.

Clearly, Bronin's State of the City address ought to arouse all taxpayers to the fact that "enough is a enough." Are there implications for taxpayers and homeowners?

Is there equity for high quality education and access for all students whether they are enrolled in magnet schools or Hartford neighborhood schools?

Why are almost half of Hartford students in neighborhood schools experiencing chronic absenteeism? Where is the outrage? Where are the parents? Where is the school and community partnership? What is the future for these students and the socio-economic impact on families and the city?

Too many inner-city parents, including new immigrant parents, do not understand how the

system of education works and their role in the process. Many do not know the value of education, they are isolated and do not know how critical it is for them to start reading to their kids as early as preschool and onward.

All Hartford students can be rescued; it's never too late. Consider this, there is a large talent pool of parents with skills in all fields. People who are caring, can become volunteers and give something back, make a difference in many lives.

The schools cannot do it alone. We have all kids with brainpower in Hartford and surrounding towns, people in all fields. People who are caring and can give something back—what talent pool of volunteers.

We can all make a difference and the schools cannot do it alone.

Many Hartford students are in a plight—join in the academic rescue mission. To join in the conversation, email: info@curetin.org.

More On Health Issues, Disorders

A number of health issues and disorders are rising to the level of a health crisis in America, destroying individuals, families, communities, and frequently dominate news outlets.

Given the unwanted impacts of the health issues

and disorders, it is imperative to revisit the state of affairs on that which is known or unknown, and come to grips with an enhanced understanding of the health issues and disorders.

From time to time, I pose a health question to a relative or friend: Why is it that I never saw or heard of health disorders such as autism and opioids when I was growing up? Where did they come from and why only now?

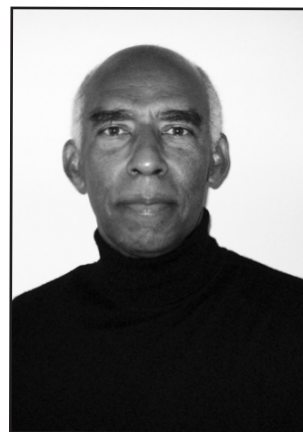
I grew up in a medical family and heard discussions on health issues all the time. One example is Crohn's disease.

Crohn's disease is an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). It is associated with inflammation of the digestive tract, or gastrointestinal (GI) tract, and includes the stomach and intestines. I knew some people, adults mostly, who had digestive tract disorders but never heard it being treated as Chron's disease.

Another disease is Parkinson's disease. I saw adults whose hands shook all the time and never heard of it as Parkinson's. I never heard the name Parkinson's and now I know that it is a progressive neurological disease for which there is no cure.

What about autism? Here are some cursory facts I gleaned on the autism disorder: In 2018 the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) determined that approximately 1 in 59 children is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Boys are four times more likely to be diagnosed with autism than girls.

Most children were still being diagnosed after age 4, though autism can be reliably diagnosed as early as age 2. Currently, major trends in autism research are at three levels: biology, behavior, and cognition.



Jim Daniels

It appears that the disorder known as autism spectrum has taken hold of this nation and enormous resources are being expended to understand and respond to it. This is a disorder not a disease.

The term "spectrum" in autism spectrum disorder

refers to the wide range of symptoms and their severity associated with the condition.

Because it is a disorder, the medical community describes it as a condition related to brain development that impacts how a person perceives and socializes with others, producing problems in social engagement and communication. The disorder also includes limited and repetitive patterns of behavior even displays of violent and uncontrolled outbursts.

Doctors are unable to pinpoint exactly where on a scale do the children of autism sit. It's not a precise diagnosis, and it is one that requires a lot of observance by parents and teachers to diagnose. Some children show signs of autism spectrum disorder in early infancy. These may include behaviors such as reduced eye contact, lack of response to their name or indifference to caregivers.

Other children may develop normally for the first few months or years of life, but then suddenly become withdrawn or aggressive or lose language skills they had already acquired.

Each child with autism spectrum disorder is likely to have a unique pattern of behavior and level of severity—from low functioning to high functioning.

Interestingly another spectrum disorder is dyslexia spectrum. Not all reading problems are the same. Auditory processing and memory skills—not visual deficits—are the most frequent cause of reading difficulties. Auditory skills respond well to training to help a child perform better in school or an adult who continues to struggle with reading, especially when paired with the goal of improving other cognitive skills.

For children with autism, patience and buckets of it are required of parents and teachers if they are to see any progress in the child's development.

Continue on Page 3

April 15 Looms: Five Tips For Tax Procrastinators

HARTFORD, CT: Putting off tax preparation? Take note that there are 28 days remaining to file your federal and state returns. Here are tips to reduce your tax filing stress and meet the April 15 deadline:

1. If you or your family's 2018 income is up to \$55,000, if you have a disability, or speak limited English, make an appointment at a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site online at 211CT.org or call 211. Walk-in filers at many of the 26 VITA sites in Hartford, Tolland and Windham County are welcome. However, please have patience, as appointment holders are served first. You may experience a long wait time or not be seen at all, depending upon the schedule of appointments for that day. So make that appointment by calling 211, or visit 211ct.org online! Individuals and families with household incomes up to \$66,000 in 2018 can also get assistance and file online at any time using MyFreeTaxes.com.

2. Make sure you have all of your income documents BEFORE you go to a VITA tax site. Here are a few commonly forgotten but essential forms:

Photo IDs for the filer, his/her spouse (if married) and Social Security cards for everyone on the family's return

A W-2 form for each job you held, or a 1099 form for each contractor who paid you.

Did you have Social Security Income? Social Security income can be taxable in certain situations; so don't forget your statement (SSA - 1099).

Health Insurance tax documents - forms 1095A, 1095B, or 1095C.

Were you a victim of identity theft? If this has happened to you and you

reported it to the IRS, you will be issued an ID Protection Pin number. The IRS mails a new number to you every year and it MUST be included in your return. Tax preparers must see these documents at the time of filing. If you don't have ALL of your documents, VITA can't complete your return.

3. If you anticipate a refund and want to direct deposit the refund into your bank account, don't forget your routing and account numbers. These are found on the bottom left-hand corner of one of your checks. Googling your routing and account numbers once you are at the tax site is not always accurate, so please bring them with you.

4. Have realistic expectations about the size of your potential refund.

Remember, the amount of your refund is based on several factors, including how much money you had withheld from your paycheck last year. Changes to tax law increased the amount of money you took home in your paychecks last year. This is a good thing, but it also means that those dollars were in your pocket and were not applied to the taxes you owe the government. So unless you changed your W-4 with your employer to withhold more, this could result in a smaller refund or a balance due.

5. Avoid surprises on next year's taxes. Begin with your W-4 Form and increase your withholding. This form should be reviewed whenever there is a change in your income or life circumstances. Talk to your HR department to adjust the form and if you need help determining how much to withhold, visit IRS.gov to view the withholding calculator.

A second way to avoid owing is to apply some of this year's refund to next year's taxes. Most tax

preparation software programs will ask if you would like this option.

About the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program in Connecticut. VITA's IRS-certified volunteers help individuals and families with 2018 incomes up to \$55,000, persons with disabilities and limited English-speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. Federal and State returns are prepared and electronically filed at no charge. Along with tax filing help, taxpayers can learn more about financial literacy support available to them from each organization. To schedule an appointment or locate VITA tax assistance sites in your city or town, visit www.211ct.org or dial 2-1-1 and press '3' then '6.'

For more than a decade, VITA coalitions have been helping working families become financially secure. Free tax preparation is one way for hard-working families to keep more money in their wallets by obtaining the tax refunds and credits they have earned. Last year nearly 28,500 tax filers across Connecticut received close to \$54 million in refunds and credits thanks to the efforts of the volunteers and organizations involved in the VITA program.

The 2019 VITA and MyFreeTaxes program partners are: CT Association for Human Services; Human Resources Agency of New Britain; Internal Revenue Service; The Village for Families & Children; and Connecticut United Ways. In addition, more information you may contact the following individuals: Laurel Kelly, The Village for Families & Children, lkelly@thevillage.org; 860-297-0504; Maura Cook, United Way of Central and Northeastern CT, mcook@united-wayinc.org; 860-493-1131.

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Caribbean Tidbits

CDB says economic outlook for the region is “positive”

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, CMC – The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) says despite projections of deceleration in global economic activity, the 2019 economic outlook for its borrowing member countries (BMC) is positive.

“CDB is projecting that real GDP (gross domestic product) growth will be 2.1 per cent, as construction, tourism, and the extractive industries, such as gold and oil, are expected to expand,” the CDB said in the Regional Economic Summary 2018.

“The expectation is that all but one of the BMCs will grow, once again led by Grenada. The rate of growth will be higher in Guyana, as the country prepares for commercial oil production starting in 2020. The one exception is Barbados, where the level of activity will remain the same,” the region’s premier financial institution.

In summary, the CDB said that economic performance in the Caribbean is set against a background of slowing global economic growth and that the current international economic environment is characterized by escalating trade tensions, volatile commodity markets, and policy uncertainty with respect to both BREXIT and United States trade.

BPO smart academy gives at-risk youths second chance

Kingston, Jamaica – The Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector in Kingston is now one of the fastest-growing industries in Jamaica, and in a bid to train more middle managers and supervisors, local BPO ITEL has established a smart classroom at the Trench Town Polytechnic College to prepare youth. The program is being done in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, which provided the students with scholarships.

“These are students mostly from Trench Town and its hinterland communities. Many of them travel here, and they do not necessarily have all they need for school, but they are embracing the opportunity, and we are seeing much growth in them in terms of just the social skills they have. This is going to be big for them as customer service agents and supervi-

sors, as the case may be, so they are warming to that,” said Dossette Edwards-Watson, principal of the ITEL BPO smart academy.

In order to matriculate into the program, persons are required to have a Level Two certificate from HEART Trust/NTA or three Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate subjects. Allen said that several students are currently completing Level Two HEART Trust courses so that they can join the BPO classes.

Change in Haiti government likely over opposition protests

There have been violent confrontations with demonstrators, who threw sticks and stones, and the police used tear gas and water cannons; shootings have also been reported. At least 11 people have died, and many have been injured. Legislative elections are scheduled for October 2019, but these are likely to be delayed, increasing the risk of having a non-functional parliament.

The likelihood of President Jovenel Moïse stepping down over the coming year is increasing; this is the second wave of disruptive protests he has faced, this time against a more organized opposition and civil society organizations. Should he step down, a transitional government is likely to be put in place,

generating a power vacuum and policy paralysis.

Guyana a leader regionally in gender equality, women’s rights
Canadian High Commissioner to Guyana, Lilian Chatterjee, at the International Women’s Day Concert and Expo, commended Guyana on its move toward gender parity, and hailed the country as a leader in the region as it relates to gender equality and women’s rights.

“Canada’s foreign policy puts women and men at the heart of its efforts and we’re so pleased to work towards a more balanced world with partners like Guyana. Guyana has a tradition of being a leader in the Region when it comes to gender equality and women’s rights.

The principle of equality and non-discrimination is enshrined in Guyana’s Constitution and throughout the years, Guyana has been at the forefront of the Region in passing progressive legislation that safeguards women’s rights,” Chatterjee stated.

Health Issues

Continued from Page 2

What of the opioid pandemic now gripping the nation? An estimated 3.3 million Americans aged 12 or over misused prescription pain relievers in 2016.

Between 8 and 12 percent develop an opioid use disorder. An estimated 4 to 6 percent who misuse prescription opioids transition to heroin.

About 80 percent of people who use heroin first misused prescription opioids. Opioid overdoses increased 30 percent from July 2016 through September 2017 in 52 areas in 45 states.

The seeds of the current opioid crisis, which killed, according to federal figures, 17,000 in 2016 were sown in 1986 when the World Health Organization identified “inadequate treatment for pain a serious public health concern.” Physicians were encouraged to prescribe pain relief drugs for cancer patients.

The American Pain Society went further in 1995, recommending that pain be treated as the “fifth vital sign,” according to the 2003 report to Congress by the U.S. General Accounting Office.

In addition to the protocol of checking body temperature, pulse rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure, doctors began asking patients to rate their pain on a

scale of 1 to 10.

According to a report in the 1999 *Proceedings of the Association of American Physicians*, opioid addiction is considered a chronic brain disease, because it is precipitated by fundamental, long-term, changes to the biological structures and functioning of this organ.

Most brain diseases have some form of behavioral expression—Alzheimer’s disease expresses itself as memory loss, schizophrenia expresses as unusual mood changes—and opioid addiction expresses itself as cravings which lead to an uncontrollable compulsion to repeat opioid use.

The fact that a portion of opioid-addicted patients originally chose to misuse opioids does not make their condition any less the result of disease. But this disease is different from other forms of addiction.

Its impact is almost exclusively on white drug abusers, users and addicts in the cities, suburbia, and rural America. Is that why there is so much shouting and alarm raising, even to the pointing out that the rate of death from opioid use has lowered the country’s mortality rate?

Medical practice over the decades provides us with a possible answer. We all have not had access to care, equally.

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Beyond Black History Month



Gretchen Johnson (center) with some employees of National Trust after conducting a focus group discussion with the group.



Gretchen Johnson (back row, third from left) with students and teachers from Prince Andrews School and members from National Trust and the Museum, St. Helena Island.

Continued from Page 1

tribal people, an African Diaspora community that arrived in India some 500 years ago.

Following this intriguing documentary, Gretchen Johnson, forensic scientist, presented her research on the genomic origins of the Liberated Africans of St. Helena Island.

After the three women presented their individual research projects, they participated in a panel discussion that focused on the importance of their work, the meaning of being black women in STEM disciplines, and how their experiences and historical studies impact their understanding of black history. The panel moderator was Greg McGruder, VP of Live Events Programming, National Geographic Society.

St. Helena Island, located

in the South Atlantic Ocean, is the most remote place on earth. It has tremendous cultural and genomic diversities that are now being unearthed—collections of skeletal remains of enslaved Africans from the 1840s.

The unique population of individuals was previously enslaved Africans that were on their way to enslavement in the Americas but were rescued directly from slave ships by British anti-slavery efforts.

Over 26,000 slaves on board ships were taken to refugee camps on St. Helena Island from 1840 to 1872 as part of the British Royal Navy's efforts to crack down on the transatlantic slave trade.

Of the 26,000 enslaved Africans that arrived on St. Helena Island, about 18,000 survived and were liberated by St. Helena's court. Later, others died in refugee camps

and were buried in Rupert's Valley on St. Helena.

Although several of the slaves were dropped off on St. Helena Island, significant numbers were sent to Kingston, Jamaica, Trinidad, Guiana, Cape Town, South Africa, and Freetown, Sierra Leone as indentured servants.

From their point of capture, the African slaves were stripped of their culture: ripped away from their families and communities, their traditional clothes and jewelry, and confiscated of their basic human rights.

St. Helena's role in the transatlantic slave trade is momentous. The historical significance of St. Helena during the final years of the transatlantic slave trade is often overlooked and forgotten.

Continued on Page 5



Liberated Africans from the 1900s on St. Helena Island

Fundraising Event At WISC To Benefit Scoutmaster Rhoden

By Jerry Hancock

When you hear or read the words: loyal friend, kind person, loving parent, committed co-worker, true scouter dedicated to serving our city’s youth and a man of faith, you may think of many people who have positively enhanced your life in any one of these realms. One such person, who has done more for all of us in this regard, and so much more, is Dean Rhoden.

Dean would be the first to extend a helping hand to any of us, should the need arise, and he has done so on numerous occasions to which many in the community can attest.

We can now return a small gesture of love, and kindness to Dean in his time of need. Recently Dean has undergone major surgery and has been contending with one of life’s illnesses that set him back in all aspects of his daily life.

A fundraising event planned to assist Dean in his time of need will be held on Saturday, March 30, 2019, 7:00 pm at the West

Indian Social Club (WISC), 3340 Main St., Hartford, CT. A donation of \$20 will help Dean offset his many financial needs, resulting from his recent challenging health issues. Music, food and a great time will be provided.

If you are unable to attend, donations in any amount are appreciated. Dean would be the first to express his appreciation for your support during this time.

Impacting the lives of others is a moniker that Dean professes to in every aspect of his life. In his long-standing role as Scoutmaster for Troop 1443, CURET’s chartered scout troop, Dean has mentored many young scouts to understand and live by time-honored values in scouting.

Three of these core values ring true in Dean’s beliefs, ‘Duty to God and Country’; ‘Duty to help others at all times’; and ‘Duty to oneself’ as expressed in the Scout Oath and Law. Scoutmaster Rhoden imparts these beliefs to all scouts and people to whom he is connected. Being a scout under Dean’s guid-

ance is a value-based experience in a young person’s life.

Some, under his tutelage have earned Scouting’s highest rank, that of Eagle Scout. After many years,

with Dean’s dedication to the scouting program and with a tremendous personal effort put forth by the many youth in Troop 1443, three have become Eagle

Scouts, Kymani Hamilton, Khalil Hamilton, and Gashaird Rhoden.

A positive-thinking man, Dean serves his community as a mem-

Continued on Page 6



Scoutmaster Dean Rhoden (seated) with Assistant Scoutmaster Jerry Hancock with scouts



Dean Rhoden (left, rear) mentoring scouts on one of many outdoor trails



Scoutmaster Dean Rhoden (standing, center), Ass’t Scoutmaster Jerry Hancock (standing, second from left) with CURET Scouts Troop 1443 at Camp Workcoeman in 2017.



From left: Scoutmaster Rhoden and Assistant Scoutmaster Jerry Hancock with scouts participating in West Indian Independence Day Parade.

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Website: www.wianews.com

Beyond Black History

Continued from Page 4

In fact, many are unaware of St. Helena’s pivotal role during this time period. Over 8,000 of the Liberated Africans died on St. Helena Island and were buried in Rupert’s Valley on the Island due to the traumatic effects of the transatlantic slave trade.

Recently, the human remains of the Liberated Africans were rediscovered on St. Helena during the construction of the Island’s first airport. Approximately 325 of the

Liberated Africans were exhumed. Most of the victims were children and young adults—prized possessions for the slave traders.

Little is known about the identity of the slaves and where in Africa they originated, this is still a mystery. During the six months that Johnson resided and conducted research on St. Helena Island, she successfully collected over 5,000 samples of human skeletal and dental materials from the 325 Africans who lived on the island during the 1840s. This collection represents the largest assemblage in the world of

this unique historical material.

Additionally, Johnson collected over 130 Living DNA samples from the modern population of individuals living on St. Helena Island; conducted interviews and focus group sessions comprising of government officials, local St. Helenians; school administrators; community organizations; individuals and families; and incorporated high school students on the island in an interdisciplinary research program, giving students hands-on experience and tools for conducting scientific research.

Johnson’s research collection opens up opportunities for comparative studies; filling missing gaps; finding answers to the question of our ancestral origins, culture, heritage; and makes important connections to contemporary populations.

The genomic data obtained from this research will allow for investigation of traits and kinship patterns that may be prevalent in the Liberated Africans, St. Helenians, individuals from the Diaspora, Continental Africans, and modern African Americans. And

this is valuable history, legacy, and the opportunity to preserve one of the remaining historical Liberated African populations of the transatlantic slave trade will be fulfilled in Johnson’s research.

The combination of forensic and molecular genomic analyses, archaeological and historical contexts will illuminate significant events that occurred in the past and specifically unveil St. Helena’s role in the transatlantic slave trade.

This research was funded in part by National Geographic and the Just-Julian Fellowship.

Rhoden

Continued from Page 5

ber of several city committees, his input in civic matters has enhanced the lives of Hartford's residents, many who are new to becoming citizens. Dean's day-to-day schedule has always been fully active in civic engagement. Dean believes in giving back to the community and does so tirelessly as a member of the Lions Club and as an ambassador for Charter Oak State College, where he earned his bachelor's degree. Through Dean's artistic talents, he has captured many significant moments in the lives of others, in his portrait sketches of them, providing a valued, lasting memory.

Faith, guides Dean in his daily life. Dean will say he is blessed to have the Lord in his life. All who meet Dean are instantly bolstered by

his optimism. Will you join Dean Rhoden in his time of need and spread the word that a fundraising event on his behalf is underway to help get him through the health challenges he is facing at present!

Please consider giving a \$20 donation, for the 7:00 pm Saturday, March 30 music, food, and great times social fundraiser to benefit our very own Dean Rhoden, at the West Indian Social Club (WISC), 3340 Main St., Hartford. Tickets are available at the door or in advance at the WISC and at CURET at 1443 Albany Ave., Hartford, or contacting one of Dean's many friends in the community, particularly long-time friends Veronica Airey-Wilson, phone 860-993-2148 or Marva at 860-548-6555. Remember, if you are unable to attend, donations in any amount are appreciated.



Scoutmaster Rhoden with son Gashaird working on a service project in preparation for advancing to Eagle Scout

Eastern Connecticut State University On Nationwaide Statistics, African-American College Students

By Ed Osborn

WILLIMANTIC, CT: Eastern Connecticut State University has received high marks in a national study of how well America's public colleges and universities are enrolling and serving African American students.

In "Black Students at Public Colleges and Universities: A 50-State Report Card" recently published by the Race and Equity Center at the University of Southern California (USC), researchers Shaun Harper and Isiah Simmons used a Ford Foundation grant to examine 506 separate institutions. In all, approximately 900,000 African American students attend U.S. public colleges and universities.

Eastern was tied for second in Connecticut for its overall "equity" rating. While the national "equity" average for all colleges and universities examined was 2.02 and Connecticut's average across its public institutions was 2.19, Eastern's rating was 2.75. The rating takes into account enrollment, gender equity, graduation rates and faculty ratios in compiling totals.

Eastern was first among all Connecticut public universities when it comes to gender equity, with 2.8 percent more African American males enrolled than the

national average. This is significant as all institutions of higher education continue to find that male students are enrolling in lower numbers than female students.

In addition, while the average four-year graduation rate for African American students is 39 percent across the United States, 46 percent of African American students at Eastern graduate in four years, tops in the Connecticut State University System. Eastern was also the top Connecticut State University when it comes to having African Americans on the faculty, with a student/faculty ratio of 24:1-one African American professor for every 24 African American students.

"Eastern Connecticut State University has always prided itself on maintaining high academic standards while providing access to students from all walks of life," said Eastern President Elsa Núñez. "Our first African American student graduated in 1908; our first African American professor-Juliette Burstermann was hired as a member of the faculty in 1948.

"Today, as the numbers in the USC study illustrate, Eastern has a diverse faculty, is graduating African American students well above the national average and has an overall 'equity rating' that is tops in Connecticut.

"Eastern's academic and support services are available to all

students, and we work hard to respect each student's talents and dreams. We also recognize the importance of supporting the success of minority students, students from low-income families and first-generation students. This latest study is clear proof that we are fulfilling that commitment."

Eastern Connecticut State University is the state of Connecticut's public liberal arts university, serving more than 5,300 students annually at its Willimantic campus and satellite locations. In addition to attracting students from 163 of Connecticut's 169 towns, Eastern also draws students from 26 other states and 20 other countries.

A residential campus offering 40 majors and 65 minors, Eastern offers students a strong liberal art foundation grounded in an array of applied learning opportunities. Ranked the 25th top public university in the North Region by U.S. News and World Report in its 2018 Best College ratings, Eastern has also been awarded 'Green Campus' status by the Princeton Review eight years in a row.

For more information, visit www.easternct.edu contact Michael Rouleau; (860) 465-0172; rouleaum@easternct.edu; view online: <http://easternct.meritpages.com/news/eastern-scores-high-on-national-study-of-african-american-college-students/7444>.

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Digital Imprints: Implications For Voters

By Leon Fraser

The various technical platforms that exist in this country allow political and economic spheres of administration to monitor and manipulate behavior, including voting actions.

I think it would be good for local electoral representatives to explore the possibility of advocating for a digital record of voters receiving a receipt of their exercising their

electoral responsibility. A sticker is not a reliable source to indicate that one has voted.

It is customary that every transaction that occurs in the USA leaves or has an imprint, a trail, to pinpoint with startling accuracy one's exact grid reference at that particular point in time, like a log book. For example, if you use an ATM or buy pizza there is a receipt to corroborate your whereabouts at that time.

The word receipt conjures an image of a paper receipt; however, with the various technical platforms that exist, and in an effort to be ecologically responsible a digital record (receipt) would be more in keeping with the advances made.

Applying this standard to voters, this record number will become the receipt number for all references electorally. There will be many hurdles to clear before this thought can or will become a part of the electoral protocol, but it would help to reduce the electoral turmoil experienced in this country of one person, one vote.

For the more astute the no-fact claim of voter fraud or of rigged elections can be considered as code words of approval to states that already are instituting more stringent measures to those who are disenfranchised, even more so for communities that are already hard hit with more voters being erased from the eligible list.

The product of a receipt to show that an individual has exercised his or her electoral responsibility will not change the outcome of elections, but it will deter some of those who

Continued on Page 7

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Connecticut-Based Employment Scam Spans Nationwide

CROMWELL, CT: Since December 2018, Better Business Bureau Serving Connecticut (BBB) received 13 Scam Tracker^s reports about three different businesses (Inspectrum, Inspection Land, LLC. and Dolphin Services, LLC.) offering employment by re-shipping packages.

This process is generally linked to illegitimate activities, and is a scam that hurts individuals looking for work. BBB and the Connecticut Department of

Consumer Protection (DCP) partnered in investigating the reports and are warning consumers not to fall for the offer.

How the scam works

Victims claim to see job postings online and elsewhere offering an easy work-from-home opportunity: simply re-shipping packages. After a quick hiring process, victims begin to receive packages. Some victims have even been sent to stores to pick up pre-paid items. Next, victims "inspect" packages, and re-ship them with new shipping

labels provided by the company.

When victims inquire about their payment, no one at the "company" they're working for can be contacted, and they never receive compensation.

It's believed that items being shipped or picked up in this scam are purchased with stolen credit cards or funds.

Risk of the scam

Consumers who fall victim to employment scams unknowingly put themselves at risk for several other types of fraud. Victims may provide these fraudulent companies

with their Social Security numbers, banking information for direct deposit and a copy of their driver's licenses, putting them at risk for identity theft.

In this scam, the victims may find themselves in legal trouble if the items being shipped were purchased with stolen money. Victims of this employment scam have been from nine states including North Carolina, Kansas, Texas, Missouri and California to name a few.

Companies involved

While Inspectrum claims to be located at 100 Constitution Plaza in Hartford, it was verified that no such business has offices at that location. Inspectrum's main website is no longer operational and their social media channels have not seen any recent activity.

Inspection Land, LLC. claims to be located at 50 Columbus Blvd. in Hartford and is registered at this location with the Connecticut Secretary of State. The owner of the building at that address confirmed with BBB that Inspection Land, LLC. is not a tenant of the building.

Based on the information detailed above, BBB cannot confirm the legitimacy of Inspectrum or Inspection Land, LLC.

The investigation has led BBB to find that the name and address of Dolphin Services, LLC. have been compromised and are being used by unauthorized individuals to carry out this re-shipping scheme. BBB contacted the owner of Dolphin Services, LLC. who verified that their information had been stolen. The legitimate Dolphin Services, LLC. continues to operate in Stamford.

If you've been targeted by a scam, help others avoid the same problem by reporting your experience to BBB Scam Tracker.

For more information contact Luke Frey at Better Business Bureau Serving Connecticut: 860-740-4500 Ext. 103.

Community Conversations On Drones And Surveillance Technology

HARTFORD, CT: Is the use of drones a modern solution to "an old-age problem," one that can help Hartford Police Department by providing more tools to fight crime? Or, do you think HPD and other city of Hartford departments' use of surveillance technology should be regulated due to concerns of civil rights and civil liberties? Or perhaps you have other thoughts about surveillance use in general?

A community conversations in Hartford's Northend on drones and surveillance technology and its implications for city of Hartford departments is scheduled for **Wednesday, March 20 from 6-8 pm at 2030 Main Street, Faith Congregational Church. The Greater Hartford Branch of the NAACP, Faith Congregational Church, and the ACLU are co-sponsors.**

The community conversation is being organized with bipartisan support from Hartford City Councilmembers Wildaliz Bermudez, T.J. Clarke, Claudine

Fox, rJo Winch and Larry Deutsch in collaboration with several community groups including the Greater Hartford Branch of the NAACP, Faith Congregational Church and the ACLU. Dr. Bilal D. Sekou, associate professor of Political Science, Economics and International Studies at the University of Hartford will moderate the event.

There are currently two proposed ordinances before the Hartford City Council. One of the proposed ordinances on Drones & Surveillance in Hartford, that has been brought forth aims for checks and balances on surveillance technology for City of Hartford departments. The other outlines policy as adopted by the Hartford Police Department, in accordance with Federal regulations. Both ordinances are currently at the City Council committee level.

The Ordinances are receiving a lot of attention since HPD received a \$2.5 million grant for Quality of Life and Public Safety, back in December of 2017, which allowed for the purchase of

drones among other technology. The drones were proposed by Senator Fonfarra, as an alternative to reducing the illegal use of ATVs in Hartford. While in November of 2018, Hartford Councilmembers heard from some residents through the public hearing process, the community conversations serve to listen to a broader constituency.

Hartford is the first municipality in the state of Connecticut to draft an ordinance for the regulation on the use of drones for its' city departments. No legislation on the use of drones has been enacted at the state level, although several attempts have been made in the last five years both in the Senate and House. Thus, the State of Connecticut defers to municipalities on the use of drones for use by city departments in conjunction with mandatory Federal Aviation regulations.

Light refreshments will be served; all are welcomed to attend. For more information contact Agnes Torres: Agnes.Torres@hartford.gov.

Digital Imprints

Continued from Page 6

wish for different results, or for the winners. It will ensure that those voted would not have had their obituaries already published.

Why should lawmakers even consider much less embark on such a task when there are so many other important issues? My answer is that this is a human right. If you live somewhere for a period exceed-

ing five years you have a right, or more like a responsibility to be a part of the collective decision that will impact your quest of having a comfortable existence.

There can be no solid evidence to be presented to substantiate a valid reason or pretext for not issuing this digital reference; however, hopefully, discussions will be opened, in an effort for transparency and progress. Elections are the bedrock of any democracy, and if there is to be the oft-spoken word of fairness and progress then this could be a clear ecological step to reduce

the human imprint of progress, with digital records; and for fair and more accurate records.

Regardless of the rationale promulgated by all outlets and talking heads, if a select group of individuals can, by individual proxy, over ride the popular choice, then the fairness component just fell over the edge of the cliff.

The need for a digital receipt at his point will not become a reality any time soon; however, this might be considered the threshold of an event that will come to fruition by the 55th president.

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Grappling With Hate Crimes Through Education

By Thomas Stub

When considering all the alarming hate crimes occurring in the United States, the time calls for a calculated and all-inclusive action, starting with the complete history of Civil War, Jim Crow Reconstruction, addressing the very old prejudice and its continuing vestiges.

It is time for the entire America and Connecticut in particular, to better understand the history of the Civil War and the Reconstruction period that followed, leading to a better understanding of the importance of making racial equality a way of life among people.

How is this possible—commitment to a comprehensive education, inclusive of every facet of society, all join in entering bridge building, nurturing education relationship, inclusive of every family, parents teaching their children, a transformation of a mandated school curriculum, the teaching of Reconstruction and the Jim Crow era beginning from kindergarten through every grade.

This ought to include instruction for parents, instructors for places of worship, gatherings—

everywhere people come together, also the social clubs.

What is at stake, demands a comprehensive approach, people need to be in dialogue, understand their history, equipped with the historical tools they need to work together, respect and accept one another, citing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

The situations and conditions around us have reached beyond control and demand swift action from the grassroots. We must come to the point where enough is enough—how much more white supremacist gathering in Charlottesville, Virginia; South Carolina Church massacre during a Bible study group; anti-Semitic shouting at Pittsburg Synagogue; white supremacist shooting at Christ Church, New Zealand and the many other hate crimes across the nation and the world.

FBI data in 2017 show hate crimes increased some 17 percent over the past year. Some 60 percent of victims targeted were due their race and over 50 percent due to

anti-black bias; 21 percent because of religion; 16 percent because of sexual orientation.

What else can take the place of educating the population from its earliest years leading to civilized human beings, inculcating basic values, respect; kindness; loyalty; empathy; politeness; practicing the golden rule from an early age, grappling with the historical tools daily: Who am I? Where I came from? Where am I going? And so determined to make the world a better place for every to live, work and play together. Marcus Garvey said: “A people without the knowledge of their history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots.”

And with this self-understanding, we can join Maltbie D. Babcock in singing: “This is My Father’s world, and to my listening ears, all nature sings, And round me rings the music of the spheres. This is my Father’s world; I rest me in the thought of rocks and trees, of skies and seas; His hand the wonders wrought.”

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