

the **Stand** south side news

www.mysouthsidestand.com

Syracuse, NY

NOVEMBER 2020 Issue 83 FREE

MOTIVATING MAN

Al-amin Muhammad drafts first book to inspire others

NATURAL SKINCARE

Family business launches out of an abundance of love

COVID capture

See how media students perceive a pandemic

In new report, NY judges ID areas of bias in our courts
Addressing racism

BACK TO BUSINESS



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4 COMMUNITY | Urban Jobs Task Force and the New York Civil Liberties Union join forces with other community advocates to press for local hiring on Interstate 81 project.

6 BUSINESS | Southside Fitness re-opens with new protocols made possible by a special small business grant by The Syracuse Industrial Development Agency.

9 FEATURES | See what it took for Al-amin Muhammad to rewrite his own story after an early life of gang violence, drug addiction and homelessness.

10 SCHOOL AND YOUTH | See how high school media students from Syracuse's Institute of Technology document 2020 in photos.

14 COMMUNITY | Learn how 100 Black judges in New York united to draft a report identifying racism in your court system.

19 FATHERHOOD | Meet Black artist and father Jean Robert Edouard Jr., who allows his 3-year-old son to get covered in paint as often as possible.

■ Cover photography by Dan Lyon of Al-amin Muhammad, founder of We Rise Above the Streets

CALENDAR | WINTER

What: Earth Corps Encore: Onondaga Earth Corps Virtual Fundraiser

When: 7 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 7

Where: Virtual Event

More Details: OEC's mission is to empower youth to be active participants in creating positive change for their communities and their environment. This virtual fundraiser will showcase the OEC crew and their accomplishments this season by showing an introductory video highlighting past and present work, share current projects and show how the organization has responded to the unique challenges of COVID-19 and 2020. Crew, staff and partners will also share testimonials, hold a panel discussion and a Q&A session.

Cost: Various sponsorship levels

More Info: Visit onondagaeearthcorps.org

What: Onondaga Community College Fall Open House Events

When: 9 a.m. to noon Wednesday, Nov. 11, Saturday, Nov. 14, and Friday, Dec. 4

Where: OCC, 4585 W. Seneca Turnpike
More Details: Join Onondaga Community College for one of its in-person (9 a.m. to noon) or virtual (10 to 11 a.m.) Fall Open House events to tour campus, meet professors and explore what can be studied in college. In-person events will be capped in order to maintain proper social distancing.

More Info: Visit www2.sunyocc.edu/openhouse



For a full listing of upcoming events, visit MySouthSideStand.com/events/

The South Side has always been blessed with an active community of volunteers ready to lend a hand. That's especially true during the pandemic as people stepped up to help on a myriad of fronts, including volunteering for The Stand.

Community advocates have been busy making sure your voice is heard. They've been registering residents to vote, making sure community members complete the census and feeding The Stand information on the pandemic and related support services so we can get that information to you.

Local groups have also united to ensure that residents get tested for COVID-19, and some groups have turned testing into an occasion for celebration. For example, 100 Black Men of Syracuse (along with many supporters) organized four nights of testing dubbed "COVID: Don't Bring It Home." The events included live music to help people pass the time while they waited for testing at the Syracuse Community Health Center. Additionally, the mentoring group helped to sponsor fun and safe activities for residents to stay engaged with their neighbors, like a socially-distanced paint party.

The Stand's volunteer photographers have been busy covering such events during this crisis. See some highlights from their work on Page 5 and by following The Stand's Instagram account @MySouthSide.

Community contributors, students at the Newhouse School and several self-described "retired," local journalists have stepped up to tell important stories as well as report on community meetings. One is Mike Greenlar, who recently retired from The Post-Standard and Syracuse.com. Over my more than 10 years working on this project, Mike gave me my greatest compliment when he shared his desire to one day retire and work for The Stand because he felt it was a publication that told the stories of the real people who call the South Side home. We're ecstatic to welcome him.

Yet even more dedicated volunteers joined me this summer to re-envision our annual Photo Walk to make it COVID safe while still encouraging residents to capture the beauty and diversity of the city. That effort also led to a new partnership with the Urban Video Project, which showcased a selection of photos captured during the re-imagined Photo Walk by projecting them onto the side of the Everson Museum.

On Page 10 of this issue, see photos from high school media students who share their perspective on 2020. We're thrilled the students took a cue from our summer contest. It is a reminder of the many ways The Stand can partner with you and your organization.

As 2020 draws closer to its end, we're excited to hear from community members about their projects and plans. We are eager to help you share your work with the community.

Don't have anything to share? We'd still love to hear from you! What do you want to see from your community newspaper? What information do you need that you don't get from other media sources?

We're here to fill those gaps!

So reach out at any time — ashley@mysouthsidestand.com, (315) 882-1054 or The Stand, 2331 S. Salina St., Syracuse NY 13205.

Please flood us with feedback. It helps us keep The Stand a true community newspaper.

— Ashley Kang



Community Message

Thanksgiving 2020

Some of us may not be able to gather the way we're used to

But let me offer this train of thought that I now bring to you

Thoughts of all the wonderful things that we can now all do:

Send a card or make a call to one family member

Or to them all

Send an email or even send a text

Skype, Zoom, Facebook or FaceTime

Your love can still be sent

Now even if you cannot get them on the telephone line

You can remember all of the blessings and good times, in your mind

So this may be different

We may gather in various ways

But we can still thank God for all the ways He's provided for us to gather on this Thanksgiving Day

— Lou Carol Franklin

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Urban Jobs Task Force and New York Civil Liberties Union unite in push for local hiring

Imagine life in the near future, five years from now or even 10. Where will you be? Where will our community be? The question is: will this community be in a better position when the Interstate 81 viaduct is removed than we are today?

The upcoming \$2 billion teardown of the viaduct offers an enticing promise of opportunity: well-paying construction jobs, stitching the community back together and economic revitalization for the city, its residents and the region for years to come.

But the promise of opportunity is not an opportunity! Real opportunity for us rarely comes without determination and intentional acts led by the people of this community and supported by state and elected officials.

The time to make our demands is now. As the federal and state agencies work to decide what will happen to I-81, we must speak up! We must submit a comment, show up to a hearing, sign a petition or contact NYCLU or UJTF.

Why get involved?

First, it is your legal right. The Department of Transportation (DOT) is required to review, answer and implement (when appropriate) any comments submitted by the public.

Make a Difference: Just being there will embolden

others to speak freely and powerfully. There is power in numbers. Even if you will not be directly affected, support those who will. Let's intensify the pressure on state officials to meet our needs.

Fed Up: The DOT agrees the original build destroyed a community, weakened Syracuse's economy and moved jobs and people out of the city. Therefore, the DOT must play a role in restoring life back into the city. Stand up and make that point clear!

Urgency: Our best chance to demand equal access to opportunity will be at the yet to be scheduled NYSDOT Public Hearing. Contact NYCLU to learn how to join Tuesday Talks about this topic.

Solidarity: Unity will tell the DOT and state and local officials we EXPECT to be heard in this project; we EXPECT to be employed on this project, and we EXPECT this project to undo the damage it created. We must unite as one!

Please contact us to get involved.

Until then, stay safe and press on.

Lanessa L. Chaplin

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Deka Dancil

President of
Urban Jobs Task Force
Urbanjobtaskforcesyr@gmail.com



COMING: I-81 PUBLIC
HEARING

NOW IS THE TIME...

MAKE **YOUR VOICE**
HEARD FOR JOBS AND
JUSTICE!

DEMAND OUR
COMMUNITY BENEFITS!

YOUR VOICE WILL MAKE
A DIFFERENCE!



NYCLU
ACLU of New York



CONNECTING DURING COVID

Photos by Bob Schulz, Justin Fogarty & Ashley Kang

Several dozen experienced and budding artists showed off their talents during a Black Lives Matter Paint Party held Sept. 12 in Syracuse's Kirk Park.

This was just one of several events community groups organized in recent months to bring residents together.

"We wanted to bring awareness to the Black Lives Matter movement while giving them a creative outlet," explained Tanisha Jackson, executive director of the Community Folk Art Center, which helped to organize the paint party.

Participants picked from several BLM templates as starting points. The center will use event proceeds to provide online art classes.

"We're also providing information about voting and COVID-19," said Drake Harrison, president of 100 Black Men of Syracuse, the event's co-sponsor. "We're setting a good example by holding it outside and following all safety guidelines."

Additionally, local South Side organizations Reclaiming our African Pride (R.A.P.), The Syracuse League of Women Voters, members of Lambda Kappa Mu, Syracuse National Action Network and the Greater Syracuse Homeowners Association Project S.O.U.L. collaborated for several months to offer weekly food giveaways. Volunteers also encouraged civic pride through Civic Saturday events to have residents register to vote and complete the census. Each Saturday featured music, face-painting and free refreshments, including hamburgers, hot dogs, popcorn, cotton candy, ice cream and drinks.

"As a five-decade resident of the South Side, it is my civic and cultural obligation to model responsible behavior for those that I live near, work with and care for," said Shiann Atuegbu of R.A.P.

Her motivation for championing civic projects is based on history. "For example, I choose to participate in the election process because it is a right that the Elders of my people fought for — many of whom paid the price for, with their very lives," she said. "I honor them by my participation."



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Visit WAER.org to hear "How Art Amplifies Social Movements"



GET IN A WORKOUT

Southside Fitness

Address: 4141 S. Salina St.

Phone: (315) 469-2753

Website: Visit southsidefitness315.com or [facebook.com/Southsidefitness315/](https://www.facebook.com/Southsidefitness315/)

Hours:

- 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday
- 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday
- 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday
- 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday

Protocols in Place: Gym is open at 1/3 of its capacity. Members must always wear a mask in the gym. Members must sign-in before their workout to help contact tracers. Members must get temperature checked before workout. Hand sanitizer stations are available throughout the gym.

Cost: \$25 monthly membership fee; currently offering \$10 for the first three months in cash payments only. Membership includes classes, towel service, Wi-Fi and two personal training sessions.

Appointments: Sign up on the gym's website

GETTING BACK TO IT

Southside Fitness among 52 small businesses to receive SIDA grant



> Tim Edwards, owner of Southside Fitness, exercised his right to re-open his South Salina Street gym with appropriate coronavirus protocols in place. Due to the pandemic, his business was closed for 161 days. | File Photo

By Dominick Pfisterer
Staff Reporter

Local gym owner Tim Edwards says grant helped provide his business needed PPE

Southside Fitness is a business built on passion. When Tim Edwards opened the gym in 2016, he would come in to open in the morning, “ready to go.”

The opening process is different now. In fact, it has drastically changed even from just a few months ago. Opening now starts at night, when all the weights are put away and patrons have left the building. Everything must be wiped down — each dumbbell, every machine and all pieces of equipment.

Before Edwards can open his doors, he must ensure his gym is compliant with the pandemic re-opening guidelines put in place by Gov. Andrew Cuomo. From disinfecting the front door to questionnaires and making sure customers get their temperatures checked, there is much more to do to start his day than simply bringing

the energy and passion he’d become known for.

“It’s a big difference right now,” Edwards said. “It’s a longer process for the members of the gym to get in, but they are handling it well.”

The gym on South Salina Street has grown in popularity since first opening, becoming a haven for healthy behaviors and a place for the community to unite.

Unfortunately, like many small businesses across the country, Southside Fitness had to close its doors due to the global pandemic. What was once a weight-lifting symphony of thuds, grunts and yells went silent.

But in September the Syracuse Industrial Development Agency (SIDA) approved 52 grants to small businesses throughout the city that were substantially affected by the pandemic. Funds were provided to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) or to acquire and install fixtures to prevent the spread of the virus, according to a press release from the office of Syracuse Mayor Ben Walsh.

It’s an unusual program for SIDA, which normally focuses on sparking economic development through tax breaks.

“In general, we are not allowed to make loans or

grants,” said Judith DeLaney, executive director of SIDA. “What happened in this particular case, legislation was passed by the senate to allow development agencies to make grants to assist businesses in recovering from (the impact of) COVID-19.”

The grant made it possible for these local businesses to purchase PPE supplies such as air purification filters, facemasks and thermometers, all of which can now be found at Southside Fitness.

“The costs of responding to the pandemic are especially difficult on small businesses and non-profits,” said Kathy Murphy, president of the SIDA board, in a press release. “SIDA is pleased to be able to provide assistance to these organizations, which are critical to our local economy.”

Gyms and fitness centers were cleared to reopen in New York state by Cuomo by Aug. 24 in most parts and not until Sept. 2 in New York City. The re-opening of gyms comes over a month after Cuomo announced July 17 that New York would enter Phase 4 of re-opening — the final phase of the state’s public health guidelines for non-essential businesses. This allows low-risk outdoor activities at 33 percent capacity as well as professional sports without fans. As one of the last business categories to be allowed to re-open, Southside Fitness had been closed for 161 days — first shutting its doors March 16.

State requirements to re-open included: Gyms be limited to a third of their total capacity and a requirement that patrons wear masks at all times. Additionally, the state requires air filters that help prevent airborne transmission of viral particles be used and for gyms to use sign-in forms for all visitors in order to assist with contact-tracing efforts.

“The air purifier system is something I would not be able to afford out of my own pocket,” Edwards said. “The grant came in big for that.”

Do you need help with your breast cancer bills?

The Saint Agatha Foundation has established funds at area hospitals and medical providers to provide financial support for breast cancer patients in Onondaga, Cortland, Cayuga, Madison, Oneida, and Oswego Counties, New York.

The following costs can be covered:

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- ▶ Transportation to and from treatment, child care
- ▶ Prescription and procedural co-pays
- ▶ Medication not covered by insurance
- ▶ Wound care systems
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- ▶ Lymphedema sleeves



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A Story Worth Telling



> Al-amin Muhammad sets up for a food giveaway at Billings Park in September. | Kristi Russo, Special to The Stand

By Kaitlyn Tambasco
The Stand Reporter

Community leader utilizes time during the pandemic to finally draft his personal story

Passionate, dedicated and heartwarming are three words Emad Rahim chooses to describe his friend Al-amin Muhammad.

Muhammad moved to Syracuse five years ago and soon launched We Rise Above the Streets. The organization coordinates efforts to feed people experiencing homelessness through weekly outreach events known as Sandwich Saturdays.

Growing up in Chicago, Muhammad was involved in gang and street violence. He even struggled with homelessness when

he lived on the streets of Atlanta. It took being incarcerated for him to take control of his life, find a higher power and convert to Islam. From there, he knew he couldn't go back to his old ways.

He worked to turn his life around and help others in need by volunteering and giving back.

We Rise Above the Streets started small with Muhammad distributing sandwiches to those in need out of the trunk of his car. A core crew of 15 volunteers quickly grew to 25 then doubled. Five years later, nearly 600 volunteers have given their time to support Muhammad's cause.

"Seeing him go out to support and listen to people in need was very powerful," Rahim said. "Al-amin continues to bring his full self and unwavering commitment to the work of service to people experiencing homelessness in our community."

Muhammad's real life redemption story is retold in his soon-to-be-released autobiographical book "My Purpose of Life: One Man's Tale Inspires a Wave of Humanity."

He says he's been on "pins and needles" waiting for final edits and book cover choices to be made so he can soon work to have it published.

"It talks about never giving up," he said in describing his book. "No matter what you go through — you should continue to fight and strive for greatness."

Ben Walsh, mayor of Syracuse, met Muhammad in 2017 during his campaign. Since then the two have developed a friendship. Walsh believes Muhammad's story is compelling and worth telling.

He pointed out that Muhammad has been very open about his past struggles and can relate to the people he's serving.

"We are lucky in this community that we have many people supporting others," Walsh said. "Through his personal experience, he brings a special element that makes us stronger to help people in need."

Muhammad started writing down his experiences, thoughts and feelings while he experienced homelessness living in Atlanta. He often visited the library during that time and a young lady there would help him type up his notes and save them into the computer.

When the pandemic hit, Muhammad had to reduce his community involvement — no public speaking or community outreach events.

Instead, he spent considerably more time alone. In the solitude, he revisited the idea of turning his notes into a book.

"One morning I woke up and my first thought was to finish the book," he said.

For the past three months, he wrote day and night.

The book shares his experiences of hurt and pain, drug use and gang violence, but also of happiness and achievement.

"There will be a lot within the book people will be shocked by," he said. "But it also shows that it's never too late. There's always hope."

Upon completing the book and finishing the final edits with his ghostwriter over Zoom, Muhammad says he was brought to tears. Knowing he had finally completed his story — he felt totally overwhelmed.

"This is one of the top and most wonderful things I've ever done in my life," he said.

He hopes readers are left with one takeaway: "Never give up on your family members or on yourself, especially those who are suffering through alcohol and drug addiction."

In times when people are struggling, he stressed there needs to be "less talk and more listening."

Additional reporting by Ashley Kang



> Volunteers distribute food. | Kristi Russo, Special to The Stand



> Al-amin Muhammad speaks with a visitor during a food distribution. | Kristi Russo, Special to The Stand

RESERVE A COPY

Title: "My Purpose of Life: One Man's Tale Inspires a Wave of Humanity"

Page Count: 150 pages

Cost: \$20

To pre-order: Call (315) 491-7164

Life During the Pandemic

1 **Locked Out** by
Kira Forget

2 **Pandemic Blockage**
by Arianna
Maeweather

3 **Remote** by
Dhan Dhakal

4 **Education 2020** by
Anthony King

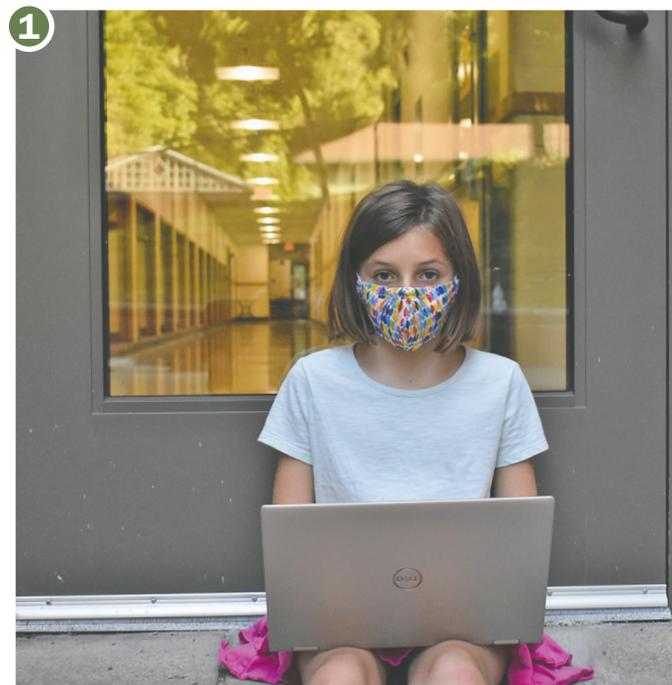
5 **Apocalyptic** by
Anthony Ponto

High school media students tackle photo assignment to reflect their experiences of 2020

Media Communication students the Institute of Technology at Syracuse Central High School worked this fall to tell stories about their lives during the pandemic using photography.

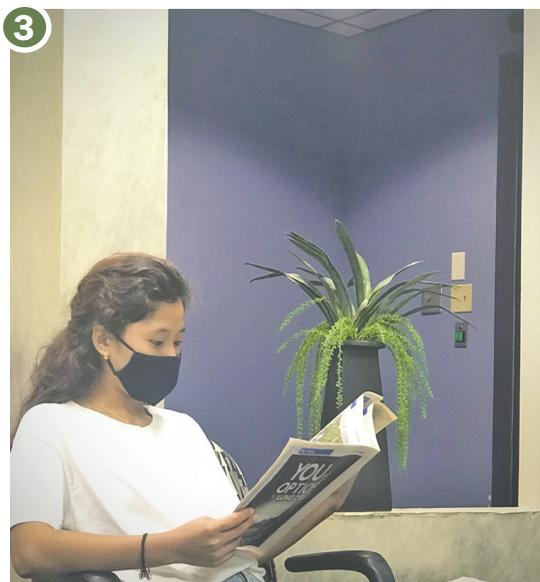
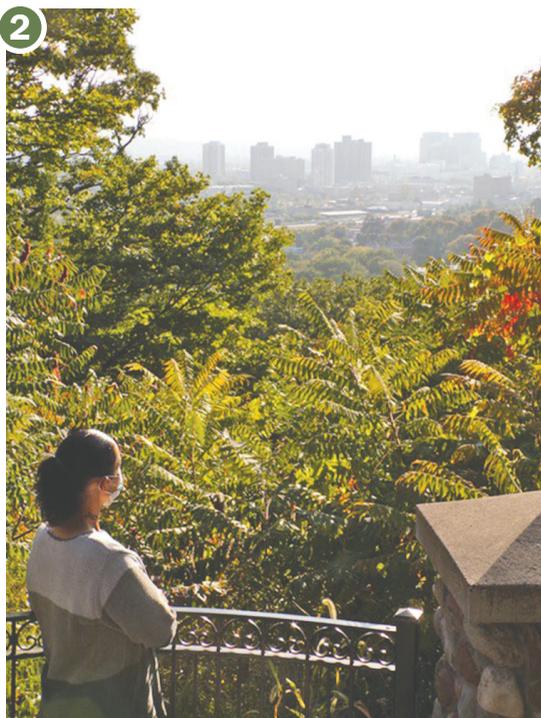
Students' photographic stories expressed a range of subjects including: commentary on wearing masks, social distancing, remote learning, racism, mental health and what it's like to be a teenager from Syracuse in today's America.

This project was inspired by Bousquet Holstein's 12th Annual Photography Contest and The Stand's 2020 re-imagined Photo Walk — both which aimed to convey similar themes of our "new normal."



#RemoteLearning

#WearAMask





5

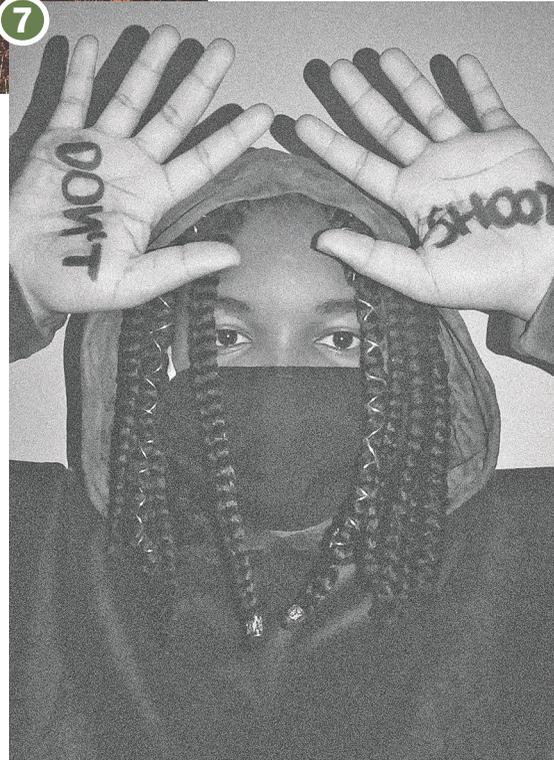
#SocialDistancing

#Isolation



6

#BLM



7

6 **Forlorn** by Annabel Hughes

7 **Say Their Names** by Aniya Gamble

8 **Black. Lives. Matter.** by Winter Pratt

9 **Rise in Love** by Armani Coffee

10 **Quarantine Loneliness** by Emma Mitchell



8



9



10

#GhostChallenge

ON THE SIDE

PASSION PREVAILED

Elijah “Eli” Harris, or Lijah as The Stand’s music columnist Reggie Seigler remembers many from the community calling him, was a busker.

Lijah had been singing and playing guitar on the streets for decades, however he’d not always done that. Seigler says he knew Lijah since the ’70s, when he used to be in the band called the “Blackberry Bunch.”

In more recent years, Donna Alford of the “Donna Alford JaSSBand” remembers when her band would play downtown at Al’s Wine & Whiskey Lounge, Lijah would pop his head in the door and give “the look.” The look meant that he wanted to sit in for a song or two — or three sometimes.

His song with the band was “On Broadway.” He would entertain the crowd sometimes with that song for nearly 15 minutes.

Audiences loved it because he was very entertaining, and they knew who he was from seeing him on the streets. Lijah knew how to capitalize on it too, because the band would usually take a break after that. He’d next go outside and keep the party going for those who would be gathered out for a smoke or just passing by.

And his tips would roll in.

HONORING ELI HARRIS

Late musician to be honored through scholarship at Syracuse University



> Elijah “Eli” Harris, far right, plays his guitar with other local musicians at the JAMS (Joined Artists, Musicians and Singers) first Musicians’ Cookout in 2014. | File Photo

By Eileen Jevis
Special to The Stand

Family establishes scholarship in memory of well-known city street musician

Elijah Harris Jr. was known throughout Syracuse as a man who shared his passion for music with those around him. Anyone walking near the Syracuse University campus would encounter Harris with a smile on his face and a guitar in his hands.

Harris could often be found on Marshall Street serenading people passing by and telling jokes.

“His love of music started when he was 8 years old,” said his daughter, Lakisha Harris. “He started playing the guitar at the age of 11. He wanted to spread harmony and his musical gift with everyone.”

In April 2020, Harris was killed while riding his bicycle in a multiple hit-and-run crash on the city’s South Side.

Family, friends and acquaintances were shocked to learn of his death and the circumstances surrounding it.

Lakisha wants people to remember not how her dad died, but that he was an amazing artist who put his heart and soul into every performance.

“My dad encountered many struggles throughout his life, but he stayed committed to his music and his journey to touch as many people as possible,” she said.

Harris, one of nine children, says her father was very devoted to his family. After performing and sharing his talents with the community, he would go home and entertain them.

“He would share his music with his children with the same energy he had on the streets,” she recalled.

While Harris played his guitar at various locations throughout Syracuse — outside the Dome, in front of the Landmark Theater or Civic Center or NBT Stadium — Lakisha says he especially loved playing near the Syracuse University campus.

“He loved Syracuse University and appreciated the love he received back from those he met,” she said. “The university embraced my dad with open arms from the very beginning, so when my family wanted to create a lasting memory, we chose to establish a scholarship at

Syracuse University as a way to honor him and say thank you.”

“Anyone who knew Eli or heard him play understands the power of music, especially music shared openly and freely,” said Michael Frasciello, dean of University College. He says the school is honored to be part of his legacy of humor, love and joy.

The Eli Harris Scholarship will ensure that SU part-time students have the opportunity to study and share music as only he could imagine.”

The Eli Harris Scholarship will provide financial assistance to part-time undergraduate students studying music or a related field.

In 2019 Harris won the Founders Award during the Syracuse Area Music Awards. It was an honor that reflected the positive impact he had on the Syracuse community.

“My father would be as excited and proud of this tribute as he was when he received the Founders Award,” Lakisha said. “With the establishment of this scholarship, the family wants to ensure that his legacy will live on.

“We want students to know that if they are determined, they can accomplish great things.”

This story originally appeared online in Syracuse University News and is republished with permission



> Daughter Lakisha Harris holds a photo of her father, Eli Harris, a U.S. Marine who served in the Vietnam War. | Photo Provided by Syracuse University

CELEBRATE HIS LIFE

The family is planning a celebration of Eli Harris’ life in April 2021.

The event will be free for the community and feature music, food and other activities.

For more information on participating, contact Lakisha Harris at elialleyway@yahoo.com

ON THE SIDE

WHEN TRUST IS CRITICAL, SAY, “TAKE ME TO CROUSE.”



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INSPIRED BY WHO?

Shirley Chisholm — the first woman to stand for the Democratic Party nomination and the first Black person to run for the U.S. presidency — wrote the featured quote used to start the recent report drafted by The Judicial Friends Association.

“**Racism is so universal in this country, so widespread, and deep-seated, that it is invisible because it is so normal**”

The report is a compilation of interviews and research on the issue of systemic racism in the New York State Court system, how it is knowingly and unknowingly perpetuated and how it can be eradicated. The authors — members of the oldest organization committed to racial equality in the field of law — say the report reveals the extent to which systemic racism is invasive and, like any other cancer, must be removed in order to ensure a fair and just system for the community.

To view the full report, visit bit.ly/JudgesReport

SILENT NO MORE

In the wake of continued killings of minorities by police, justices speak out

By Jeff Kramer
The Stand Columnist

Over 100 New York judges of color unite to write report on bias they see in the court system

Embedded in a new report on racial bias in New York state courts is a link to a segment of the popular TV show “What Would You Do?” starring John Quinones. The episode can’t substitute for the exhaustive findings of The Judicial Friends Association, a long-standing organization of Black and other minority judges. But it neatly distills how implicit racial bias seeps into almost every human endeavor.

The segment features actors posing as bike thieves — first a White male, then a Black male and finally an attractive White woman.

You can guess how it goes.

The White thief is all but ignored.

The Black thief is quickly surrounded and hounded by a large group, some of whom call 911.

The attractive blonde? One chivalrous male literally helps her steal it even as the “thief” admits that’s what she’s doing, all while the man’s wife watches in disbelief.

“Reg, I’m going to call the police,” she snaps.

The video is used in U.S. District Court in Washington State to educate prospective jurors about biases people can harbor without realizing it — implicit bias. Adding it in New York state courts is one of dozens of recommendations found in the 75-page report.

“It’s long and it’s probably dull,” said association President and Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Erika Edwards with a chuckle. Perhaps. But the thoroughly annotated take-down of New York’s labyrinthine court system has a ring of authority, eschewing finger-pointing and naming names in favor of exposing entrenched patterns. Those range from disrespectful treatment of minority attorneys by court officers to a dearth of promotions extended to Black judges to addressing chronically negative attitudes about the police held by minorities so they’re not excluded from juries.

The report was submitted in September to former Director of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson, who was appointed to head The Commission on Equal Justice in the Courts. The panel was established in response to the killing of unarmed racial minorities by law enforcement and ensuing demands for change throughout the criminal justice system.

Edwards deemed it a valuable opportunity to finally be heard on longstanding issues of racial fairness.

“I don’t think some people understand what other

people are going through — the pain,” she said.

Even little slights, intentional or not, have a way of festering. Edwards recalls that years ago, as lead defense counsel in a high-profile terrorism trial in New York, she was the only defense lawyer omitted from the courtroom sketch widely circulated to media. It was as if the artist could not reconcile that the most important member of the defense team was Black.

Such biases reverberate.

According to the report, none of the executive judges in the Office of Court Administration are Black. Just three Black judges hold statewide positions and just six Black judges sit on the 81-member Court of Claims appointed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

The numbers for elected versus appointed Black judges are better overall — but not beyond New York City. Of 143 Supreme Court justices, just nine (6.3 percent) are Black.

Syracuse City Court Judge Derrek Thomas, one of three Black jurists in Syracuse (the others: Vanessa E. Bogan and Gordon Cuffy), termed the document an important first step not just toward revamping the court system but the institutions that feed into it. Of every 10 defendants he sees in his court, seven to nine are Black, depending on the day. By contrast, only three of every 10 city residents are Black, according to the 2010 census.

“There’s more work to do collectively” to combat racism both outside the courts and within them, he said.

While it’s no secret that racial bias infiltrates all aspects of society and government, the human toll can be extraordinary when it’s the criminal justice system. As the report notes, a decision by an officer to charge a suspect with a felony verses a misdemeanor has immense consequences for the defendant, even more so when there’s a lack of diversity in the prosecutor’s office.

“Discretion does have a substantial impact in charging people,” said state Supreme Court Justice Gordon Cuffy. “Once you’re charged, it puts you in a certain position legally.”

Taken as a whole, the report is a call to upend the notion that Whites are inherently good and deserve benefit of the doubt while Blacks are inherently threatening. The enormity of that challenge is laid bare in the Quinones video. In the span of an hour, about 100 people pass the White male thief. Only one couple intervenes seriously enough for the producers to rush in to stop the gag. Among the passersby who do nothing: two Black women. Asked later why they didn’t call police or confront the man, the women say they assumed the man’s business was legitimate. Says one: “Young White men don’t usually carry burglar tools.”

LIVING AND PLAYING IN PEACE

Community Contributor Keith Muhammad recalls the moment he first experienced racism

It started out as a blissful, pleasant and peaceful summer in 1965. That all ended the day the boy and his family moved into the neighborhood. I didn't know his name, but I learned he's from the south—Alabama. Family members made that known.

They also made it known that they hated me.

I just turned 9. My mother, younger brother and I lived in the James Geddes Housing project in Syracuse. The complex consisted of a mix of two-story row houses for families and high rises for senior citizens, which the children called the “Old People Buildings.” It was a small complex, about 300 apartments, unlike some larger projects in New York that can have a few thousand apartments. There was ample green space throughout the complex. Black, Caucasian and Native American children shared the space and played together peacefully.

One morning as I stepped out the door, I noticed a Caucasian family of five, who I had never seen before, sitting on the back porch, diagonal to our back porch. I paused, looked, and looked away. Then I heard someone shout, “Go over there and fight that nigger!” Startled, I turned to see who they were referring to; who was going to fight.

I realized they were talking about me. Then a boy about my age began walking toward me. The whole family was encouraging him to fight. “Yeah, yeah go fight him!” they shouted in unison. “You can beat that nigger!” I had never heard the N-word used before, but I could tell by the tone of their voices and facial expressions it wasn't good.

I felt the hate.

I wondered: What did I do to make them so angry? Shocked and confused, I did what any 9-year-old with sense would. Heart pounding, mind racing, I turned and headed straight for the door to the safety of my home.

Mrs. Epps, my brother's babysitter, greeted me. “What's wrong?”

“They are trying to fight me.”

“Who's trying to fight you?”

“Those people sitting on the porch.”

I went to the door, pointed, “There, that porch right there.”

She could hear the shouting: “Come out and fight!”

The boy stood in the yard, anxiously waiting for me to come back out. His confidence fueled by the insults grew with each passing second that I failed to answer the challenge. I looked at Mrs. Epps and nodded my head as if to say, “See, there they are.” Her facial expression changed from concern to anger and disgust. She frowned, glared at the crowd and clenched her jaw to suppress her anger. “Hold on a minute,” she instructed as she proceeded to remove her apron.

It was about to go down.

They had no idea who and what they were about to deal with. Lillie B. Epps was born in 1886 in Mississippi. She was married to Mr. Charlie Epps. They had 15 children, one of whom was Jesse Epps, an activist who fought for worker's rights. Mrs. Epps knew how to deal with adversity, particularly the kind of vitriol and hate that Blacks endured on a day-to-day basis in the Jim Crow South. She was about to show them that this was the North—a different place, a different time, different people and a different kind of Black woman.

She scurried out the door. “Come on,” she said, as she headed



> Keith, right, with brother Mark Muhammad circa 1965.

toward the group and stopped at the edge of their yard.

“Is there a problem?”

“Yeah, our boy is going to fight him.”

“Why?” she asked.

“Because we're from Alabama, and we don't like Coloreds!”

Hearing enough, she looked at me and said, “Fight him.”

I was dumbfounded. I didn't expect it to play out this way. I reluctantly turned to meet my doom.

After some maneuvering, I gained control. I was on top. I held him down for a while, hoping that he would give up. No such luck. He broke free and jumped to his feet. We stood and gazed at each other, reluctant to resume the confrontation. The fight was over. We walked back to our respective yards; both of us greeted with cheers of victory. Somehow I felt that we both had lost.

The rest of the summer went by without incident. We did not speak to each other until the fall of the following year. I remember it was on a Wednesday. I was walking home from school, and I saw the boy and his little sister walking ahead of me. I caught up with them, and we struck up a conversation. We talked for a while and then his sister said. “We are going to have ice cream when we get home.” I like vanilla ice cream,” she added. “Chocolate is my favorite,” I responded. “You are chocolate!” he quipped. “Yeah, and you're vanilla!” We laughed.

I came to understand how children become prejudiced. They are not born with a prejudiced bent of mind. The Bible says, “All are born in sin.” It doesn't say: all are born “with” sin. No, we are born in a world of sin; shaped by the institutions that govern our life force, i.e. parents, schools, religious institutions, the media, etc. It is from these that we learn prejudiced attitudes, stereotypes and hate.

The boy from Alabama was not born with a hatred for me. Nor was he born with a desire to fight me. His family impressed it upon him. We should not force our children to take on our prejudices, our fears, our likes and dislikes and our hatred. Although there may be apparent differences between us, perhaps if we let our children be children, together they will find a way to live and play in peace.

LOCAL LINE OF SOAPS

Patience Promises Love

Phone: (315) 758-4188

Online Store: Visit patiencepromise.com

Additionally find on: Etsy, Instagram and Facebook Business account @PPLOVELL

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Local parents' new business born out of an abundance of love



> Patience Promises Love, a new small business that makes natural soaps, was named after the owners' — Fantasia Dunton and Kyle Moore — two daughters. | Photo Provided

By Patrick McCarthy
Staff Reporter

Pair, inspired by their daughter, develops a natural skincare line to meet her special needs

While many businesses were shuttering their windows during a summer of unprecedented calamity, Fantasia Dunton was preparing to open the doors to her new soap store.

Patience Promises Love LLC offers all natural soaps, scrubs, body butters, beard balms and more. Dunton, 25, originally decided to create the shop after experiencing difficulty buying skincare products for her young daughter Patience.

Dunton and her fiancé, Kyle Moore, became new entrepreneurs in order to develop natural soaps for their daughter's sensitive skin. Because of a heart condition

that renders her skin sensitive, Patience can only use soaps made of all natural ingredients.

Dunton said that Patience has at least five different doctors and goes weekly to physical therapy and speech appointments. Keeping up with Patience's care, schoolwork and now the business has been a challenge, one compounded by the fact that Moore himself also has a heart condition.

"I didn't think about that," Dunton said of how remote learning — herself even a student at Onondaga Community College — would intensify her already busy schedule. "I make it work, though."

Though Patience Promises Love officially opened for business July 30, the idea of the shop had been in the works since January.

It has been a family project from the start. When Dunton told Moore about her idea, he eagerly signed on, and they decided to name the company after

Patience and her older sister, Promise.

The pair dedicated significant labor toward this effort. Dunton designed the website, while Moore handled the photography. Then there were countless hours of researching ingredients and experimenting with different smells and oils. The couple uses melt and pour soap bases, rather than actually manufacturing soap from scratch, but the process nevertheless requires significant trial and error.

“It’s just basic,” Dunton explained. “It has no scent to it. It’s just white and all clear — just soap. You have to figure out what scent you want.”

Without Moore’s help, Dunton said the project would be impossible. Moore helps out around the house and tries to ease Dunton’s workload, and on top of that, has been intimately involved in the skincare business since its conception. In fact, Dunton said her fiancé is even better than her at coming up with smells for soaps, beard balms and other products.

While the couple clearly have a passion for what they’re doing, the importance of accuracy in the composition of their products is not lost on the pair. As they offer many products designed

specifically to address or combat a skin condition such as eczema, the couple take seriously their responsibility to their product’s quality.

“You wear your skin every day,” Dunton said. “So for someone to trust me and my fiancé is really awesome.”

While the majority of sales are made online, the owners say brand name recognition continues to be a hurdle. Because of COVID-19 and the related social distancing guidelines, Dunton said they have not had very much in-person business so far, a problem she is planning to address with new strategies to engage potential customers.

Dunton is working on a Facebook Live event and spoke about setting up a stand at the Regional Market, which would increase revenue and simultaneously spread the brand.

Advertising a business while staying on top of schoolwork and raising a family can’t be easy, but, unphased, Dunton is rising to the occasion.

“Our goal, later on in the line, is to get a house for my baby and her sister, so they can be free in the yard and enjoy themselves,” Dunton said. “So I don’t plan on stopping anytime soon. I plan to keep going and going.”



TOP SCENTS:

- Turmeric
- Mango Lemonade
- Avena



Jean Robert Edouard Jr.

Nominated by Reggie Seigler



MEET FATHER JEAN ROBERT EDOUARD JR.

This 32-year-old artist and father of Messiah Jean, 3, describes himself as "the fun dad." He says his son enjoys watching him paint and has even helped him create art since he was a toddler. | Provided Photos

By Ashley Kang
The Stand Director

Q: How did it feel when you became a father?

A. To be honest, I wasn't nervous. Most men get nervous; they get terrified or scared. I wasn't afraid of becoming a parent. I always knew one day I would become a father. I just didn't know when.

Q: What was the moment like when he was born?

A. It still feels sometimes like it hasn't hit me yet. It comes in spurts. I think it didn't hit me until now when I see him at this age — time really does speed up when you have kids.

Q: What can you share about your son?

A. He likes to paint like me, and I make sure he's around me when I'm painting or if I go to art shows, galleries or museums. I try to have him be around art to gain skills and interest. He's a shy kid at first but when he warms up to you, forget about that, he's all about you. He's friendly, happy and loves to make friends no matter where he goes. He's a very loving child.

Q: What was your relationship like with your father?

A. It was good, yet he passed away when I was very young. There're things I still remember, and I can see that I took. A perfect example is he used to love sleeping on the floor or laying down on the floor — that was his thing. Even to just watch TV. He would rather lay down on the floor because that is where he felt most comfortable. I catch myself doing that. Looking back, our relationship was good. He was there and took me to school, helped with homework and taught me how to dress — the small stuff.

Q: What do you love most about being a father?

A. Just having fun and being a kid again. Getting messy, dirty and having fun. Plus seeing him act goofy, that makes me laugh and makes me happy — watching him be himself.

Q: Is there anything special just you and him share?

A. I guess it'd have to be our handshake. I wanted something just for us. We continuously practice. At an early age, I started with the fist bump and it grew from there. We do it when I see him for the first time maybe on a pick up, if he's going to go to bed or if he's feeling sad. I give that handshake and it cheers him up. No one did anything like that with me. I came up with it because I wanted to create something that was only for me and him — it's our bond.

Q: What has been your biggest challenge?

A. Teaching him how to use the bathroom and become potty trained. When people say that kids watch what you do, that's a true statement. I tried something different (in teaching him). If I used the bathroom, I made sure he was with me. Then one day, he did it by himself. Now he's fully potty trained at age 3.



Q: What advice do you have for first-time dads?

A. To have patience. Be patient with your kid and show them you care. It's hard and stressful to be a parent, but patience is the key. Also, most kids want their parents to be in their world, meaning to play with them. So I would advise to spend as much time as you can with them, travel with them and be patient. Finally, love the experience.

Q: Final thoughts?

A. I know there's going to be a time that he's not going to want to be around his parents, so I'm trying to enjoy the moments and the journey. I want to put as much time into parenting as I can.

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