

THE VOICE

A Trusted Voice From The Community's Perspective



ECONOMIC BLACKOUT

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT FEB. 28 NATIONAL NO-SPENDING DAY PAGE 3



THE REFLECTOR
Our Annual Black History
Supplement Inside

Kansas Revoked or Restricted License?
Here's the details on the
New Law Effective Jan. 1, 2025
Page 5



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Proposed Ban on Formaldehyde in Hair-Straightening Products in Limbo Under Trump



Kansas Democrats Tough New Approach: 'When They Go Low, Introduce Their A\$\$ To The Basement'

By Clay Wirestone
The Kansas Reflector

The words speak for many, not just in the cities and towns and rural communities of Kansas, but across the nation.

"What is wrong with the Democratic party of which I am a member? Where do I begin. I've said since my arrival in Topeka that the party doesn't know how to fight."

These words come from an extraordinary open letter by Wichita Rep. Ford Carr, a forceful presence in Topeka. Carr was in the headlines last month after his heated dispute with Wichita City Councilman Brandon Johnson at a Topeka pub. Carr subsequently left his role as ranking Democrat on two committees. The letter offers his version of recent events and challenges the party to take a more aggressive stance.

To hear Carr tell it, he didn't want to be on those committees anyway.

"I sought this separation weeks ago for myriad reasons including my party's brand of vapid party leadership that I could no longer stomach."

I'm not interested in litigating Democrat-on-Democrat disputes. I've been around enough politics in my life to know that tempers and emotions run high in the halls of power, and each person with a set of eyes and ears experiences the same events differently. I enjoyed my pre-session interview with House Minority Leader Brandon Woodard and cannot begin to imagine his challenges.

Yet the core of Carr's message has little to do with such conflicts.

It's about what Democratic politicians — and anyone with



Bernie Sanders

progressive or centrist or mildly conservative values — need to do in a moment of governmental crisis. It's about how to react to a government that has become so untethered from the wishes of the people that it actively serves to harm the health, wealth and institutions of citizens.

"It is apparent that the presidential election did not work out as we Democrats had planned, but what of our local and state elections? Our party not only failed to eliminate the super majority but in fact watched Republicans pad that majority. I believe that when you get hit, you should hit back twice as hard. At this point, my philosophy should be clear on more than one level. The optics of hitting back may not be the most pleasant, but someone, somewhere in this party must summon the courage to do more, risk more, and fight harder than we have. We must stand our ground rather than weakly wagging our fingers and declaring, 'shame on you.'"

Those opposed to extremism desperately want a voice. They want someone to step up and embody their outrage. At the state level, they want someone to shout about school vouchers and civil rights and tax cuts for the rich. At the federal level, they want someone to



Rep. Ford Carr, D-Wichita, questions Rep. Rebecca Schmoie, R-Ottawa, during an April 2024 debate in the House.

TIM CARPENTER/KANSAS REFLECTOR

believe from atop a car that Donald Trump and Elon Musk are strip mining the federal government and dynamiting civil service.

And yes, they know that Democrats don't have their hands on the levers of power. But that's the point. If you don't have formal political power, you have to turn to rhetoric and persuasion. You have to speak up, speak loudly and speak often.

Vermont Independent U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders gets it. I was skeptical of Sanders a decade ago. I lived and worked in New Hampshire and sat through an editorial board meeting with the man. Sanders made a fervent case but hadn't quite crafted a compelling national message.

He has now. Regardless of ideology, he shows exactly the spirit that Carr writes about.

Lawmakers can be blunt and outspoken without crossing the line into regrettable rhetoric. They

can fight with words, not fists.

This pugnacious approach serves two main purposes. First, it gives an outlet to discontented voters. Much as the Tea Party movement mobilized discouraged Republicans in the wake of Barack Obama's election in 2008, robust messaging would allow progressives a way to rediscover their bonds and nascent political power.

Second, such speech attracts new voters. Any political coalition must look to grow and expand. If Democrats and progressives were guilty of one main sin over the past two decades, it would be instituting a series of purity tests — pushing folks to use certain vocabulary and adopt certain positions with little explanation. An inclusive new approach would allow the party to chart a new course with new supporters. Especially those who voted for Trump to lower the cost of living, not enact a purge against Black people.

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Support for 24-Hour Economic Blackout Growing

What to know about Feb. 28 national no-spending day

By Voice News Service

A national no-spending day called “The 24-hour Economic Blackout” is gaining traction on social media. Set to take place on Feb. 28, the boycott takes aim at major retailers like Amazon, Walmart, and Best Buy.

Organized by the advocacy group The People’s Union USA, the nationwide blackout is designed to shed light on consumers’ impact and to push for economic change. According to the organization’s website, the 24-hour spending pause sends a message to corporations, industries, and politicians about economic power in the U.S., which they say is “in the hands of the wealthy elite.”

The no-spending day boycotts major retailers, banks, gas

The move for a national no-spend day comes after several major corporations rolled back their diversity, equity, and inclusion policies amid President Trump’s call to end federal DEI programs and threaten tariffs on international imports.

Economic blackout participants will refrain

from making any in-store and online purchases from retailers, restaurants, large banks, fast food companies, and gas stations on Feb. 28. The organization will also avoid using credit or debit cards.

The boycott targets non-essential spending. However, spending on essential goods, such as food, medicine, paying bills, and emergency supplies, is allowed during the blackout.

The People’s Union says to only shop local small businesses during that time, if necessary.

Why is There A 24-Hour Day of No Spending?

According to The People’s Union, the organization aims to emphasize the power of the consumers’ dollar, “taking back power, breaking free from economic control, and building a future where the people ‘not corporations’ decide the direction of this country.”

The organization adds that it’s not a political party or a protest, but a movement of people unionizing in order to “take back control of our economy, government and future of our country.”

How long is the Economic Blackout?

The blackout is scheduled to take place for 24 hours, starting at midnight on Thursday, Feb. 27, until midnight on Friday, Feb. 28. While it’s intended to last for a day, The People’s Union could extend the blackout for longer.

What To Know

While the nationwide economic blackout

applies to all discretionary spending, the organizers are targeting some retailers in particular.

This includes:

- Amazon
- Walmart
- Best Buy

But participants are also asked to refrain from spending money on fast food or gas.

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- A personalized plan to help you with your symptoms and to help you reach your goals

Kansas Black Legislative Day Draws Sellout Crowd

By Bonita Gooch
Voice Editor-in-Chief

Despite the frigid weather, the annual Kansas Black Legislative Day at the capitol attracted a sellout crowd of individuals interested in learning more about the issues and legislative initiatives affecting African Americans across the state.

Kansas Black Legislative Day is sponsored by the Kansas Black Leadership Council, The Voice, and the Kansas African American Affairs Commission.

Again this year, the event was held on Presidents Day, which allowed students and others with the holiday off to attend.

Some of the workshops and topics covered included:

Protecting Public Schools, presented by Kansas State Board of Education member Dr. Beryl New

Issues in Foster Care, presented by Marilyn Shaw and Sherilyn Ray, of Restoration Family Services, Inc.

Collective Economic Empowerment featuring Lazone Grays, president and CEO of IBSA.

A highlight of the event each year is a presentation by Gov. Laura Kelly.

While at the capitol, some of the attendees sat in on the Senate and House general sessions and/or committee meetings. A popular session was a hearing on officially recognizing Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day. Another session included a hearing on a bill introduced by Sen. David Haley (D- KCK) that would authorize the governing body of the unified government of Wyandotte County to create a port authority.



After her presentation, Gov. Laura Kelly poised for a photo with KBLD attendees.



Donnavan Dillion, an organizer with Loud Light, presented a workshop on community engagement.



The audience was large and attentive.



Having the event on Presidents Day helped attract students who were out of school as well as individuals who had the holiday off.



Marilyn Shaw and Sherilyn Ray, owners of Restoration Family Services, Inc. the only African-American owned Foster Care Provider in Kansas, spoke to the group about issues and legislation and their impact on Black families in Kansas.



New KS Rep. Wanda Brownlee Paige (D-KC) joined other African American members of the Kansas Legislature in providing attendees with a legislative update.



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New Law Effective Jan. 1 Relaxes Kansas' Tough Suspended Driver's License Laws

Failure to pay fines no longer results in automatic suspension of driver's licenses and it's easier to get a restricted license if your license is revoked.

By Meg Britton-Mehlisch
The Community Voice &
The Wichita Journalism
Collaborative

If you failed to pay a traffic ticket in Kansas, you probably know now what you wished you had known before. If you didn't pay your ticket within 30 days and didn't make arrangements to pay your fine or go to court, your license was suspended.

Advocates and legislators have long criticized the system they say appallingly left thousands of Kansans stuck without legal means to drive — sometimes for years — often because they lacked the funds to pay a ticket in a timely manner.

They say the law disproportionately and unfairly impacted poor and low-income Kansans.

Effective Jan. 1, a new law passed during the 2024 legislative session puts in place a number of changes that provides more breathing room between the time someone fails to pay a ticket or show up in court and when or if their license is suspended.

The law tackles a bunch of different parts of the license law. It makes it easier to get a restricted license if your license is suspended, reduces the fees individuals must pay to get their license back and gives local courts the flexibility to waive fees and offer alternative methods to pay off fines particularly for individuals experiencing proven "financial hardships."

By the end of January, state officials said that 123,549 drivers — about 1 in every 15 drivers in Kansas



Failing to pay a traffic citation on time in Kansas automatically triggered a suspension of your license after 30 days. However, effective Jan. 1, 2025, the timeframe before your license is suspended has been extended. Learn more about that change and other changes in policies and procedures relating to restricted and revoked licenses that also went into effect on Jan. 1.

— had their license suspended because of a failure to comply. These are supposed to be temporary suspensions, but state research found that some suspensions last decades, primarily because people couldn't pay the fines.

While there was much fanfare around the reform at its passage — it's the first substantial change to the law since 2021 — legal experts and state officials caution that since going into effect on Jan. 1, there's still more work to be done to figure out how the law will function for the more than 250,000 drivers with a restricted, suspended or revoked license.

SO WHAT'S NEW?

The new law changes the rules and policies related to restricted, suspended and revoked licenses. (See box for definition of restricted, suspended and revoked license.)

Put on Notice

Instead of automatically suspending a person's license if they fail to

pay their ticket in a timely manner, the new law has the state restrict a driver's license first.

Under the new system, a driver who receives a traffic citation has 30 days to pay the fines for that ticket. If the driver doesn't pay the fine, appear in court, or make a payment arrangement with the jurisdiction who issued their ticket, then the court will notify the state's Division of Vehicles that the driver has "failed to comply."

That's when a notice is mailed to the address listed on the driver's license that their driving is restricted. Once the notice is sent, a 60-day clock starts that allows the driver to pay the ticket, appear in court or make a payment with the court before their license is suspended.

Being in compliance doesn't require a person to pay the ticket in full. However, if they enter into a payment agreement with the courts but fail to meet the terms of that agreement, they will no longer be considered in "compliance."

If an individual hasn't kept the address on their license up to date,

they'll likely miss that important notification.

Restricted Licenses

You can't legally drive if your license is suspended, but that doesn't stop a lot of people.

Michah Tempel is an attorney with Kansas Legal Services. He said that studies show about 75% of people with suspended licenses continue to drive "because we live in a society built around the car."

That's a gamble. If a driver is pulled over for another traffic violation while they have a suspended license, they'll end up with a new case for that citation as well as a criminal charge for driving while suspended.

People with a suspended license do have some options, though.

They can apply with the division of vehicles for another restricted license. Under the new law, if the restricted license application is granted, drivers will have their restricted driving privileges indefinitely until their failure to comply is fixed. Prior to Jan. 1, restricted licenses were limited to 12 months.

The state's restricted driver's license allows individuals to drive to and from a location for a list of defined purposes: work, school, drug or alcohol counseling, an appointment with a healthcare provider or in a medical emergency and as part of work responsibilities.

The new law added driving to and from the grocery store, daycare, gas stations and religious services to the list of allowable activities.

Substantial Compliance

A not-so-clear concept introduced under the new law is a status referred to as "substantial compliance."

Before, "compliance" was a black-and-white issue. If a driver had any unpaid fees or fines, courts were required to send the state a notice about the driver's outstanding balance, triggering an automatic license suspension.

See LICENSES Page 8 →

What's your status?

A valid license means you have no legal encumbrances on your license. The new bill doesn't impact individuals with a valid license, but it does help if you get a driving citation by impacting the rules and policies surrounding suspending your license.

A **suspended license** means you can't drive legally until you remedy a citation, fines or court order. Your license may be suspended for a number of reasons, most often for failure to comply, or failure to pay you fine within the allotted timeframe.

A **revoked license** means you can't legally drive for a period of three years. Once that time is up you'll still need to remedy whatever situation prompted the original revocation — like paying a fee, completing a court ordered class or adding a breathalyzer to your car — and then reapply for your license.

A **restricted license** allows you to drive to and from a set of specific locations legally even as you may be dealing with penalties from the courts around your driving behavior.

Unsure of your status? The state's Division of Vehicles has created a website where you can input your name and driver's license number to see your license status: www.KDOR.ks.gov/Apps/DLStatus.

Study Found High Cancer Rates Near Wichita Chemical Spill, But New Info Muddies the Results

At issue is the physical area the state analyzed in a 2023 health study near the 29th and Grove contamination site.

By Celia Hack
Kansas News Service

The Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment has provided inconsistent information on a health study it published two years ago about a chemical spill in Northeast Wichita.

The spill near 29th Street and Grove happened decades ago, contaminating a long plume of groundwater. In 2023, the state published a health study looking into cancer rates and birth outcomes near the spill, following requests from residents.

The report ultimately found significantly high rates of liver cancer, especially among Black people. While the state emphasized that the study could not determine whether the chemical spill was responsible for the health disparities, the outcome alarmed residents and set into motion legislative and local efforts to provide health screenings for those impacted by the spill.

Two years later, though, the state says the physical area it analyzed to measure cancer rates was much larger than the groundwater plume itself and larger than what was originally reported.

Some community members now wonder how useful the

study's findings are in drawing conclusions about the health impact of the groundwater contamination.

"There may be higher incidences in that plume, but we can't know that because we're taking in this very large geographic area," said Sedgwick County Commissioner Jim Howell. "... So we're left with a giant question mark. We don't really know what the data is telling us."

The original health study said that the analysis focused on "2,793 addresses representing the area of interest where the contaminated groundwater plume has travelled." Media outlets across Wichita and Kansas – including KMWU, The Wichita Eagle and the Associated Press – reported that cancer rates were higher above the chemical spill specifically.

But in recent emails with KMWU, KDHE revealed that the study actually analyzed cancer rates in two ZIP codes: 67219 and 67214. These ZIP codes contain the addresses above the groundwater plume – but they also contain thousands more that were not exposed to the 29th and Grove contamination site.

Meanwhile, KDHE wrote in a statement that the portion of



The groundwater contamination originated from a spill by Union Pacific employees at this north Wichita rail yard. The spill was discovered in 1994 but is believed to have happened in the 70s or 80s.

the study that focused on birth outcomes did analyze addresses specifically in the plume area, as opposed to the two ZIP codes. KDHE wrote that the availability of more detailed birth outcome data allowed it to conduct the precise analysis. The study found that the rate of babies with low birthweights born to mothers living above the plume was significantly higher than the rate in Kansas.

Howell said KDHE needs to correct the report to clearly identify the area of interest that was studied for cancer rates. KDHE wrote to KMWU that the study was not incorrect, though acknowledged it may be "confusing."

Why Does it Matter?

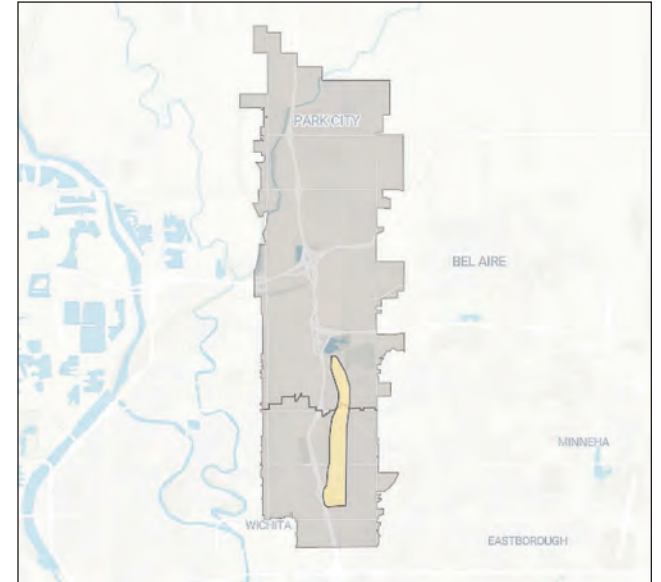
Clarity around where a health study is conducted is one of the key pieces of information

that must be justified to the public, according to the Centers for Disease Control's 2013 recommendations into investigating cancer clusters.

"The definitions and the justification should be transparent to the community so that they understand the rationale behind the approach taken," the recommendations read. "This means sharing information that is consistent, timely, and expressed in a manner that the lay public is able to understand. Otherwise, these decisions might be seen as arbitrary and thus be rejected by the community."

State Rep. Ford Carr, whose district includes parts of the contaminated area, said the state should have been more transparent about the study.

"At a minimum, when they released that information, it



A 2023 health study measured cancer rates in ZIP codes 67214 and 67219

The groundwater contamination runs 2.9 miles south of 29th and Grove. The approximation of the plume here is based off of a KDHE map, but the area impacted by the spill was only a small portion of the studied area.

should have come with that disclaimer" that the study looked at ZIP codes 67214 and 67219, Carr said.

The 2023 health study did reference the two ZIP codes once, saying KDHE used Census data to count the number of people in 67214 and 67219. It did not define the two ZIP codes as the "area of interest," which

the study refers to throughout the study when discussing cancer rates.

Calls for a More Specific Study

Defining the boundaries of the area of interest is a key part of designing a health study.

See **STUDY**, Page 8 →

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The highlighted area shows the proposed Marvin S. Robinson II dedication. (UNIFIED GOVERNMENT OF WYANDOTTE COUNTY)

Kansas House Bill Would Dedicate Highway Near Quindaro Ruins to Former Rep. Marvin Robinson II

By Grace Hills
Kansas Reflector

A House committee has advanced legislation to dedicate a portion of highway in Kansas City, Kansas, near the Quindaro Ruins to former Rep. Marvin Robinson II — who died in August after spending his one term in the Kansas House fighting for the preservation of the ruins.

House Bill 2029 is sponsored by 110 representatives in the 125-member House, including leadership from both parties.

“There is no more fitting tribute to Marvin — an individual committed to his community and public service — than honoring him along this specific stretch of highway,” said Democratic Rep. Barbara Ballard of Lawrence in her testimony last week before

the House Transportation Committee.

The Quindaro Ruins were once the Quindaro Townsite — an area where slaves seeking freedom on the Underground Railroad established a community in the 1850s.

Republican Rep. Patrick Penn of Wichita, a friend of Robinson who introduced the bill, said Robinson spent 37 years working toward preservation of the ruins.

Robinson fought for the ruins to be recognized on the National Registry of Historic Places, and helped prevent the area from becoming a toxic waste landfill. He was known as the “Mayor of Quindaro,” Penn said.

“It is such a rich, historical place that he worked his life trying to make sure that it

was enshrined appropriately,” Penn said.

Robinson, a Democrat from Kansas City, Kansas, had a complicated history of voting across party lines. While he sponsored bills that would not tax hygiene products, end the death penalty and commute the sentences of marijuana-related crimes, he differed with Democrats in support of increasing restrictions on food assistance and his decisive vote to override Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly’s veto of a transgender athlete ban.

After Robinson sided with Republicans on the transgender athlete ban, a \$250,000 provision to preserve the Quindaro Ruins was added to the Republican’s budget plan. Kelly vetoed the funding.

Some of his Democratic colleagues said Robinson sold

his votes for the funding. Rep. Louis Ruiz, also a Kansas City, Kansas, Democrat, told KCUR “he’s a crusader and he’s willing to die on his sword.”

Republican-aligned PACs supported Robinson’s reelection effort last year, when he lost to Rep. Wanda Paige in the August primary.

Paige told Kansas Reflector on election night: “This man wasn’t going for the people in the district.”

Robinson received 22% of the vote and died two weeks later.

At last week’s bill hearing, Penn said Robinson “humbly faced extreme friction and viscous opposition with a quiet grace that concealed the grace of his will.”

The committee on Monday voted without opposition to send the bill to the full House for consideration.

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LICENSES, from Page 5 ↓

Now, judges are allowed to decide if the work someone has done through an approved alternative like attending diversion, completing community services or complying with a payment agreement, is adequate enough to declare them in “substantial compliance” with the court’s orders. The court notifies the state that the obligation to the court on that citation or citations have been met.

There doesn’t seem to be a consensus so far exactly what “substantial compliance” is and how it works.

Nathan Emmory is the Wichita municipal court administrator. He said understanding of this part of the law is something that’s still developing among judges and court staff.

Emmory said it’s unclear if a driver would have to make a motion before a judge to request a determination of substantial compliance and at what point someone’s work would be considered substantial.

Others believe the wording was left intentionally vague to allow the judge a level of discretion based on the circumstances.

Even so, Emmory said the Wichita courts are working to apply this part of the law more often, starting with cases where the only reason an individual’s license is not being reinstated is because of an unpaid reinstatement fee.

Once a judge determines substantial compliance, that would remove the driving suspension for that case.

He did caution that many people have multiple cases or suspensions at the same time so this determination from a judge doesn’t necessarily get someone their driving privileges back, but it’s a start.

Reinstatement Fees

In addition to fines, drivers in the systems are subject to a number of fees including court costs and license reinstatement fees.

Before this year, drivers were required to pay a reinstatement fee for every citation they were issued. For example, if you were cited for speeding, driving without a seat belt and driving on a suspended license, you’d have to pay a reinstatement fee for each citation issued. Effective Jan. 1, the fee to reinstate a license is capped at \$100 per case.

Revoked Licenses

A revoked license is the most stringent of the state’s license penalties and it’s a status that lasts for three years. Previously, if an individual’s license was revoked, they didn’t qualify for restricted license privileges.

Now, an individual may be able to qualify for restricted driving privileges if they don’t have more than three convictions for driving on a suspended license due to a failure to comply case. If the driver does qualify, they can have restricted driving privileges for the rest of their time with a revoked license.

So is the Law Helping?

State data shows out of the thousands of drivers with suspended or revoked licenses, since the new law went into effect only about 500 submitted applications to the division of vehicles for restricted driving privileges.

Between the start of the year and end of January, only about 40% of the 1,626 drivers who were referred to the state for failure to comply were given the 60-day period to comply.

The other 60% did not qualify because their licenses were already

suspended or revoked or because the severity of the citation didn’t allow them to qualify for the extension. For example, drivers ticketed for DUI do not qualify under this new system.

Local advocacy groups say they’ve worked for years to get this far. The Wichita Racial Profiling Advisory Board was one of those organizations. The board worked closely with Kansas state Sen. Oletha Faust-Goudeau for almost a decade to get bills introduced each session that offered reforms to the state’s driver’s license suspension laws.

They made some strides in 2021 on expanding access to restricted privileges for drivers whose licenses were suspended. Board chair Sheila Officer said the group’s latest push was to get individuals with revoked licenses the right to drive on a restricted basis.

That’s in the bill, but some of the more sweeping reforms in the legislation have yet to pan out.

According to Tempel, one of the ineffective measures was a section that was meant to help individuals whose driver’s licenses were still suspended because of years-old failure to comply cases. The law states that

the courts or division of vehicles won’t consider any failure to comply “convictions” older than five years. The state says this part of the law doesn’t apply to everyday drivers because they are not convicted for failure to comply, they’re sanctioned.

The new law has enhanced some of the work that Wichita city staff are doing to make the license restoration process more accessible.

Emmory heads up the Wichita Area Restoration Program that helps individuals view their driving records and understand their license status. Members of his team also work to help drivers fill out restoration applications and applications for manifest hardship. Manifest hardship determinations can help individuals get some of their outstanding fees waived.

The Racial Profiling Advisory Board of Wichita has also created a guide for how to navigate the process in Wichita and Sedgwick County specifically. Part of the law mandated that forms needed in the restoration process be available to drivers in court.

“I’m going to say this is a good step forward, but it should not be the only step,” Officer said.

STUDY, from Page 6 ↓

That’s because it’s “possible to create or obscure a cluster inadvertently by modifying the area of interest,” according to 2022 guidelines for investigating unusual cancer patterns by the Centers for Disease Control and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

Carr, Howell and Aujanee Bennett – a community activist focused on the contamination – all say they would like the state to analyze cancer rates above the 29th and Grove groundwater plume specifically.

“Much more detailed research is needed to determine the incidence among those who resided in the affected homes,” wrote Elizabeth Ablah, a professor in the Dept. of Population Health at the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita, in a text to KMUW. Ablah has researched local groundwater

contamination issues.

Without this analysis, Howell said there’s little information to understand how groundwater contamination impacted cancer rates.

“We maybe inadvertently have misled people to be seeing this report as a justification for their great fear,” said Howell. “I know there is a problem there, but ... the magnitude may not be as great as what people thought because the report actually is misleading.”

State Epidemiologist and Environmental Health Officer Farah Ahmed told KMUW in December that KDHE has to measure cancer rates at the ZIP code level. That’s because a population estimate is needed to calculate the rates.

“We rely on Census data for that,” Ahmed said. “And so there’s no Census data available at the neighborhood level, so I have to use Census data for the ZIP codes.”

KDHE recently used ZIP codes to complete another

health study in east Wichita at the request of the Forest Hills neighborhood, which has a contaminated groundwater plume beneath it. The study found no disproportionate cancer rates in the two ZIP codes encompassing the neighborhood.

Several neighbors complained that designing the study around the two ZIP codes, instead of the impacted neighborhood, could dilute the effect of the contamination.

What is the Risk to Residents?

It’s not clear when exactly the chemical spill near 29th and Grove took place, though experts have estimated it occurred in the 1970s or ’80s. City staff discovered it in 1994, and Union Pacific Railroad was identified as the source of the spill in 1998.

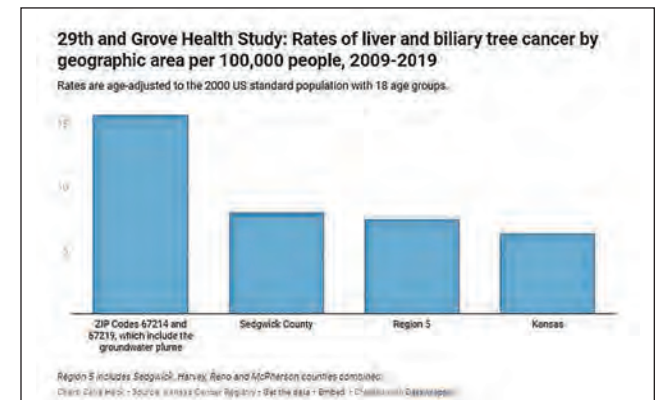
The chemical spilled – trichloroethylene – is often used in manufacturing. It’s also a carcinogen, with strong

evidence linking it to kidney cancer and some evidence linking it to liver cancer. Some human studies indicate that trichloroethylene may cause small birth weight, though these people were also exposed to other chemicals. The Environmental Protection Agency announced in December that it was banning the chemical.

The largest risk to Wichita residents is if they drink the contaminated groundwater from a well, according to the KDHE.

The KDHE has said that City of Wichita public water – which is safe to drink – is available across the contamination area. One well used for water consumption was identified in the plume area in 2022, and bottled water was provided to the resident. In March 2023, the residence was connected to the city’s public water supply, and the well was disconnected.

Anecdotally, some residents who live or have lived above



Region 5 includes Sedgwick, Harvey, Reno and McPherson counties combined.

the plume say that groundwater wells were common in the area decades ago.

Trichloroethylene also has the ability to evaporate from the groundwater into the air, and the KDHE has said there is potential for risk of residents inhaling contaminated vapors. Union Pacific conducted air quality testing in some homes and buildings above the plume in 2004, 2009, 2012 and 2013.

None of those tests found

concentrations of trichloroethylene above the state’s indoor air quality standard for a residential setting, according to Sedgwick County.

However, the state’s air quality standard became more stringent between 2009 and 2012. Some air quality tests from three houses in 2004 showed TCE levels above KDHE’s current standard, but the levels fell within the standard at the time.

The
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THE VOICE



NAT KING COLE

His Often Overlooked Role in the Civil Rights Movement

Judge Issac F. Bradley's
KCK Legacy

Pappy Allen's 60 Year
Football Legacy

The Lost Legacy of
Western Tuskegee'

It All Started With Four
Black Nuns

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Nat King Cole's Often Overlooked Role in the Civil Rights Movement

By **Donna M. Cox**
University of Dayton

Six decades after Nat King Cole's death in 1965, his music is still some of the most played in the world, and his celebrity transcends generational and racial divides. His smooth voice, captivating piano skills and enduring charisma earned him international acclaim.

One of the most influential artists of the 20th century, Cole was not only a groundbreaking musician but also a quiet, yet resolute, advocate for social justice.

As an African American sacred music scholar, I have been immersed in the inseparable link between music, culture and social change for over 40 years. Examining Cole through the lens of his activism uncovers the nuanced ways in which he challenged the status quo and contributed to the Civil Rights Movement.

Beneath the polished veneer of his public image lay a deeply personal commitment to confronting racism and advocating for equality that is often overlooked.

Formative Years

Nathaniel Adams Coles was born on March 17, 1919, in Montgomery, Alabama, to Perlina Adams Coles and Edward James Coles. Perlina served as the organist at the True Light Baptist Church and later the First Baptist Church of North Chicago, both pastored by Nathaniel's father. She passed her love for music to her children, teaching them to play the piano and organ. Cole's formative years were spent in church; gospel songs, hymns and spirituals formed the foundation of his musical education.



Group portrait of singer Nat King Cole with his mother, Perlina, his younger brother, Ike, and his father, Edward, circa 1940.

NAT KING COLE PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION/NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Though Cole is primarily remembered for his jazz and pop hits, the emotive power, communal emphasis and uplifting nature of Black sacred music profoundly shaped his artistry throughout his career, despite his single sacred album, "Every Time I Feel The Spirit," released in 1959. The influence of gospel music, in particular, can be heard in his soulful phrasing and heartfelt delivery, contributing to his remarkable ability to connect with audiences.

Growing up in Chicago, he was also exposed to a rich tapestry of musical genres, including blues, classical and jazz. This eclectic upbringing laid the foundation for his versatile musical style and commercial success.

Group portrait of singer Nat King Cole with his mother, Perlina, his younger brother, Ike, and his father,

Edward, circa 1940.

Nat King Cole photograph collection/New York Public Library

While Cole's music was not overtly political, his very presence in the mainstream was a statement. In an era of racial segregation, he was a Black man achieving unprecedented success in a predominantly white music industry. His impeccable diction, tailored suits and sophisticated performances countered the prevailing stereotypes of African Americans as uncouth or subservient.

By embodying a poised and dignified persona, Cole communicated a powerful message: Black excellence and humanity could not be denied. As race scholar George Lipsitz writes in "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness," "The cultural field ... is a site of struggle where meanings are

contested and power relations are negotiated."

Cole's success challenged the structural racism that sought to confine Black artists to the margins and opened doors for future generations. He acknowledged the significance of his presence on national television, recognizing it as a potential turning point for Black representation. While hesitant to explicitly label himself an activist, he contemplated the impact of his success on breaking down barriers, believing that "when you've got the respect of white and colored, you can ease a lot of things."

Confronting Racism

In response to critics who dismiss Cole's legacy as apolitical, I argue that they overlook the complexity of his resistance. Several scholars have stated that in a society



Nat King Cole performs in Copenhagen, Denmark, in April 1960.

EBBE WRAE/JP JAZZ ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

where overt defiance often resulted in violence or economic ruin, Cole's ability to navigate the entertainment industry while maintaining his dignity was itself a form of activism.

Though Cole never referred to himself as an activist, he confronted racism in both overt and quiet ways. Scholars such as cultural theorist Stuart Hall and researcher Laura Pottinger define "quiet activism" as modest, everyday acts of resistance – either implicitly or explicitly political – that challenge dominant ideologies and power structures. These acts often entail processes of production or creativity.

Despite his commercial success, Cole faced relentless systemic and personal racism. In 1948, he purchased a home in the affluent Hancock Park neighborhood of Los Angeles, a move met with hostility; the local homeowners association attempted to expel him, and he endured threats and acts of vandalism.

Yet Cole refused to be intimidated. His resolve was a courageous act of resistance that highlighted the pervasive inequalities of the time.

Cole faced blatant discrimination in Las Vegas. He was often denied access to the same hotels and restaurants where he performed, forced to stay in segregated accommodations. One particularly notable incident occurred at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. When the maitre d' tried to deny service to Cole's Black bandmates in the dining room, Cole threatened to cancel his performance and leave. This forced the hotel management to back down, setting a precedent for other Black entertainers and patrons.

Cole quietly sued hotels and negotiated contracts that guaranteed his right to stay in the hotels where he performed, a significant step toward desegregation. He also made it a point to bring his entire entourage, including Black musicians and friends, to these establishments, challenging their "whites only" policies.

'We Are Americans Too'

Cole's impact extended beyond the realm of music. In 1956, he became the first

See **OVERLOOKED** Page B3 →

Pappy Allen's Youth Football Legacy Celebrates 52 Years

This year, as the city begins to implement plans that will bring an end to the legacy created by Pappy Allen, we decided to revisit this 2017 story about a man whose league legacy lasted 60 years and whose personal impact will continue to make a difference in the lives of thousands for years to come.

By Bonita Gooch and Larry Allen

The year was 1964; a history-making year. It was the year Junior League football, the precursor to the Great Wichita Football League, was formed. It was Alvin (Pappy) Allen and a few of his good friends that made it happen.

It was still a time of innocence. The crime rate was low, for a Midwest City, Wichita was reasonably integrated, although housing and schools were mostly segregated. Kids played outside until the street lights came on, and baseball was king.

Pappy Allen had played a little baseball in his day. He played on a semi-pro league and, during exhibition games, he played against some of the great Negro League Players who



Alvin "Pappy" Allen

would go on to integrate the National Baseball League.

Even though Pappy was a good player, he had to put his dreams on hold to take care of his growing family. Pappy and his wife Ruthalyne, had a growing brood and by the time they finished, they had eight children in all, seven boys and one girl.

Pappy worked as a butcher at the packing house, a good job for a man with so many mouths to feed. But those well fed boys needed a way to burn off some energy, as well as a way to stay busy. Pappy started the boys in the sport he knew best – baseball.

Field of Dreams

So in the 1950s, he organized and coached baseball teams as part of the City's Westside Athletic League. That kept the boys busy during the

summer, but Pappy needed to keep this group busy a little longer. At that time, the only organized youth football league was the Aircraft League, and it was only open to the children of aircraft industry employees.

That excluded a lot of kids in the neighborhood and Pappy decided to do something about it. He approached some people he knew, including some coaches from baseball, with his idea of starting a youth football league.

It would be easy to say the rest is history, but a 60 year legacy takes a lot of work to build. Pappy's vision would turn into one of the most popular and prosperous youth football businesses in Wichita.

Don't get the wrong idea; Pappy never made a dime off the league. In fact, Pappy was the kind of guy who went into his pocket to make sure kids who didn't have money to play could. Plus, he was never looking to make any money from the league. He just wanted to provide children in the neighborhood an opportunity to play ball.

Back then, a lot of parents had big families, and many were struggling economically. So, when Pappy started the league, it was free. He approached the City about using their football fields and an amicable agreement was reached. Two years later, the City approached him about taking over the league.

"He was always looking out for those less fortunate," says his son

Larry Allen. "It [starting the league] was a very selfless act that came from a man who had a humble heart full of love and consideration for others."

From the Ground Up

This was a home-grown organization with Pappy managing all the details during the evenings and on weekends. Larry says he recalled painting the first horseshoe, the Colts emblem, on a helmet, waiting for it to dry, then painting the other side. Pappy helped raise money for uniforms and for the player and league fees. No, the league wasn't free any more. When the City took the program over, they immediately began charging players and teams a participation fee.

Larry says he knew there were costs associated with the league, since too often he saw his father go into his pocket to help cover costs, but he was more than disappointed his dad wasn't offered even a part-time position assisting with the league he started and had grown.

After the City took over the league, Pappy worked on building the Colts brand. He grew the organization to include a team at each of the levels: 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th grade. Then the organization added cheerleaders, which provided a way for young girls in the community to become involved.

At one point the League had so many youth come out they knew it was time to start another organization.

"We had 70 something players come out and we could only keep 33," recalls Larry. "We didn't want all of those interested not to have an opportunity to play, so Theo Cribbs, who was a part of our organization, broke away and started the Bulldogs."

Pappy's Legacy

Early on, Pappy saw athletics as a way for children who came from homes where money wasn't plentiful, to get a college education. He also saw the potential for his sons. Even though Ruthalyne worked for the Model Cities Program, it still would have been tough for the Allen's to send eight children to college.

All of the boys were active in sports with a number of them going to college on sport's scholarships and all of them going on to coaching, either volunteer but also in paid positions.

It's easy to see the impact that Pappy had on his own family, but there were many more, such as Barry Sanders, a Wichita native who played on the Colts team.

"There are many role models that come from our city and we do not want to discount or overlook any of the men and women who have impacted our city but there is no question that tAlvin (Pappy) Allen is one of those individuals that had major influence," said Allen.

His legacy will live on well into the next generation of those who desire to help others. Pappy Allen passed away Sept. 16, 2019. He was 93 years-old.

OVERLOOKED, from Page B2 ↓

African American to host a national network television show, "The Nat King Cole Show." This was a groundbreaking moment, as it brought a Black man into the living rooms of millions of white Americans every week.

Though the show faced challenges with sponsorship due to racial prejudice, it marked a significant step toward greater representation and acceptance. As historian Donald Bogle notes in his 2001 book "Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies,

and Bucks," "Television ... became a new battleground for the image of the black performer." Cole's show, despite its short run, was a crucial battle in this war.

When Cole was attacked onstage by white supremacists during a concert in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1956, it underscored the physical danger Black public figures faced and galvanized Cole's commitment to the Civil Rights Movement.

It is important to note that Cole's support for the Civil Rights Movement was often quiet and behind the scenes.

He faced criticism from some who felt he should have been more outspoken. However, his actions demonstrate his commitment to the cause of racial equality. Cole, who died in 1965 at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, was a member of his local NAACP branch. He also performed at benefit concerts for the organization, raising money to support their efforts in fighting racial discrimination.

Shortly after the attack in Birmingham, Cole recorded his only song that is specifically political, "We Are Americans Too." Recorded in 1956, the

song was a powerful statement of belonging and a challenge to racial exclusion. Though it would not come close to reaching commercial success, it did serve as a powerful reminder that African Americans were, in fact, Americans. Over a half-century later, this song still resonates and speaks to the ongoing struggle for full inclusion and recognition for marginalized groups.

The juxtaposition of the refrain "We are Americans too" against the backdrop of the treatment of Black people during the Civil Rights Movement gives this song

emotional weight. The very act of having to assert "We are Americans too" highlights the injustice of the situation.

It underscores the disconnect between the ideals of American democracy and the reality of racial inequality. In this context, the refrain "We are Americans too" is an act of resistance, a challenge to the prevailing social order. It highlights the hypocrisy of a nation founded on principles of liberty while denying those same liberties to a significant portion of its population. It's a call for America to finally recognize the full humanity and

citizenship of its Black citizens.

Great art, and great artists, are powerful witnesses of the times in which they live, love, work and play. Their commentary, both artistically and humanly, leaves an important record for generations. This is clearly evident in Nat King Cole.

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THE OBLATE SISTERS OF LEAVENWORTH

Black Nuns Who Built Hope from Hardship

For 71 years that included periods of intense racial violence, this little-known order of Black nuns positively impacted the lives of thousands of Black youth.

In April 1888, four Black nuns stepped off a train in Leavenworth, Kansas, drawing stares from onlookers who had never seen African-American women in religious habits before.

“A novel sight was witnessed by the habitues of the union depot yesterday morning,” reported the Leavenworth Times, “when four colored sisters of charity alighted from the train.”

These pioneering women belonged to the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first successful order of Black Catholic nuns in the United States.

Founded in Baltimore in 1829 by Mother Elizabeth Lange, a Haitian immigrant, the order dedicated itself to educating children of color at a time when teaching Black children to read was still illegal in many states.

Their mission brought them to Holy Epiphany Church in Leavenworth — the first Catholic Church for Black people west of St. Louis — in response to a plea from Father Martin Huhn. He had established an orphanage for Black boys but, with too little help, was struggling to provide them proper care.

The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth had been teaching Black children in Sunday school, but also found themselves overwhelmed as more orphans arrived needing help.

The four Oblate Sisters who answered this call — Mother Teresa Victoria Messonier, Sister Gabriel Oliette, Sister Genevieve Newman, and Sister Michael Huff — faced

daunting challenges. Yet, over the next 71 years, through determination and faith, the four sisters and others that followed them, built two thriving orphanages and a school that educated thousands of Black children.

“These sisters changed the lives of at least 2,000 kids,” says Lolita Law, who recently wrote and directed a play about their story, “Divine Resilience: Covenant of Faith.” “Where would those children have been if not for those sisters — who look like them and understand them — coming to take care of them?”

Answering the Call

According to diocesan records, Father Huhn borrowed \$10,000 to purchase 21 acres with a dilapidated house at 22nd and Dakota Streets to establish an orphanage but was struggling.

The four Oblate sisters found dire conditions when they arrived in Leavenworth.

Archives from the Oblates describe their living quarters as a tiny attic with a ceiling so low the sisters couldn’t stand upright. There were too few beds so the sisters slept on the floor and tried not to mind the cramped quarters or the leaky roof.

“The conditions of this first home were terrible,” says Law, the playwright. “There was never enough food, and early on there was a lot of struggle.”

Sister Gonzaga, who missioned with the Oblates in Leavenworth and later chronicled its history, said the first winter was tough, with the 14 young boys at the orphanage



The Guardian Angel House in 1911

also sleeping on the floor: “The boys slept on boards covered with clean hay ... with no coverings but old carpet,” wrote Sister Gonzaga.

A Dangerous Time

The sisters arrived during a period of intense racial violence in Leavenworth. The city was witness to several lynchings in the post-Civil War era between 1887-1901, including multiple murders by White mobs.

While records from the time are mixed, there is at least one historic account of the Ku Klux Klan burning a cross near the orphanage. In addition to Blacks, the Klan also targeted Catholics.

“You can imagine there was plenty of pushback [to the Oblates being there],” Law notes. “But they did have some support from those in

the community.”

Despite this threatening environment, the sisters pushed forward with their mission to serve the Black community. By August 1888, just four months after arriving, they had taken charge of education at Holy Epiphany School.

Building Something from Nothing

The Leavenworth Oblates had several opportunities to leave for better accommodations but refused to abandon their mission and the children in their charge.

Oblate archives show the sisters made do with what they had available and consistently found a way to care for the children. If food was running short, they visited neighboring farms seeking donations as they gradually



The girls at the Holy Epiphany School stretch for outdoor activities.

built up the Guardian Angel Home for boys and eventually the Holy Epiphany Home for girls.

The sisters continued innovating to support their mission. To keep the doors

open, they began taking in fine laundry work to earn money, all of this in addition to teaching and running the orphanage. They grew their

See NUNS Page BH7 →

Atty Issac F. Bradley Blazed Many Trails in KCK & Nationally

Born in Missouri just before the end of slavery, Bradley was a national civil rights advocate, but he dedicated the majority of his work to justice, economic and civil rights improvements in Kansas City, KS.

By Claire Rips-Goodwin
Guest Contributor

Issac F. Bradley, was born in 1862 as a slave, just two years before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Despite his humble beginnings, he became the first Black graduate of the University of Kansas Law School, an established business and civil rights leader in Kansas City and a champion for African American rights nationally and at home.

Bradley's granddaughter and biographer, Frances Robinson, has spent years researching her grandfather's legacy which she shares in community publications and in the biography "Recent to Persists" that she authored in

Her book, along with excerpts she shared from the trilogy of publications he wrote, we learn about a community leader whose impact can still be seen and felt in the Kansas City Metro area and across the nation. While he was a respected and recognized national Black leader, this attorney, activist and serial entrepreneur's greatest impact was in the local Kansas City community and on the lives of the city's Black residents.

In his 1915 political treatise, "The Reign of Reason," Bradley described his upbringing in Cambridge, Missouri as one of "hard times." He never knew his father, who left two weeks after he was born and in a poor and uncomfortable upbringing, and he never had a new hat or a new pair of shoes until he was 17 and he wrote, he "was often short on old ones."

When he was 19-years-old, despite having very little education he decided to go to Lincoln University after a man in "fitted clothes" with a "demeanor all too different from what [Bradley] had been accustomed to" walked into town.

The man was a graduate of the Lincoln Institute (now Lincoln University) in Jefferson City, Missouri. It was the first, and at that time the only, institute of higher education in the state providing education and training to freed slaves. The man had such an effect on Bradley that in

1881 he went to Columbia where he persuaded instructors to let him take classes and work to pay for them.

The experience, while difficult, was ultimately successful. In 1885 he graduated at the top of his class.

Early Legal Success

The summer after he graduated he spent considerable time reading a book "Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising" by Rev. William Simmons. The book contained pictures and short write ups on some of the prominent Black men in America.

From his study of the book, he determined that law would be a good career. That could help him achieve. Since the law schools in Missouri didn't accept African Americans, he decided to enroll in The University of Kansas Law School in fall 1885.

KU wasn't without its racist students or instructors and Bradley also struggled with financial woes but his persistence paid off and he became the first African American to graduate from KU Law School in 1887.

After completing law school Bradley opened his law office at 518 Minnesota in Kansas City, and was soon elected Kansas City Kansas Justice of the Peace in 1889. He was the first African-American elected to this position. In 1894 he was appointed A Wyandotte County deputy county attorney, then as 2nd assistant to the county attorney and later as 1st assistant prosecuting attorney.

As he rose in the ranks of the local judicial system, Bradley never abandoned his community and served in numerous local civic and political positions that helped enhance the lives of the residents of Wyandotte County.

Sumner High School

In 1904 Bradley was appointed as attorney for Lewis Gregory, an African American youth accused of murdering Ray Martin, a student at the racially integrated Kansas City Kansas High School. Bradley presented a case of self defense with Gregory pleading not guilty, but an all-White jury found him guilty.

The intense racial climate that



Bradley family: Atty. Issac F. Bradley and his family: Back Row: Bradley's children Issac F. Bradley Jr. and Ruth Bradley. Front Row: His wife Mamie Bell, mother-in-law and Atty. Issac F. Bradley

surfaced as a result of that high profile case led parents to appeal to the Kansas legislature to implement separate high schools in Kansas City, KS. Bradley spoke in support of maintaining the integrated schools, but the white parents prevailed and the legislature voted to exempt Kansas City, KS from the state law prohibiting racially segregated high schools.

That led the Kansas City Board of Education to establish segregated Sumner High School in 1905.

Entrepreneurship

In a brilliant move that helped maintain African-American economic independence in Kansas City, Bradley helped form the American Commercial League Coal and Feed Company. By pooling their resources, this group of Black entrepreneurs were able to buy essential goods like coal for heating, feed



Bradley (back right) was among 29 people from across the nation who joined W.E. B. DuBois to participate in the Niagara Movement Meeting in Ontario Canada to organize for Civil Rights

See **BRADLEY**, Page **BH 7** →

THE LOST LEGACY OF 'WESTERN TUSKEGEE'

How a Thriving Black College Became a Prison

A group of Topeka locals hope to revive Kansas Technical Institute and make it a modern HBCU.

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

Standing in his front yard in 1983, Edwin "Train" Hughes stared across the street with tears in his eyes, telling a young Curtis Pitts about the prestigious Black college in Topeka where he had once played ball and later coached.

With Hughes' gaze fixed on the spot where he had cherished memories of Kansas Technical Institute, Pitts looked in the same direction but couldn't see it.

"I'm trying to figure out which college he was talking about because all I could see was a prison," Pitts recalls.

That's because the land and buildings that used to be home to Kansas Technical Institute are now home to the Topeka Correctional Facility, the only prison for women in the state.

That conversation, which occurred 40 years ago, stuck with Pitts. Motivated by that conversation, Pitts is on a mission to resurrect the once great institution and have the land and building it used to occupy returned to the Black community.

A Proud Beginning

Founded in 1895 by Black educators Edward Stephens and Lizzie Riddick, the Industrial and Educational Institute of Topeka started modestly as a kindergarten and sewing school in the Tennessee Town neighborhood, an area settled by Black Exodusters from Mississippi and Louisiana. Two years later the school moved to a two-story building on Kansas Avenue near 2nd Street.

The school quickly gained prominence, earning support from Booker T. Washington himself, who joined its board of trustees in 1900.

"It was a 'For Us, By Us' project, meaning that the founders



Kansas Technical Institute had a proud sports and band tradition, including this championship football team from the 1933-34 season.

were African American and the buildings were built by the students," says Donna Rae Pearson, historian and curator with the Kansas Historical Society. "Even though education in Kansas was integrated at the upper levels, it was still hard for Black folks to go to a place of higher learning."

By 1903, the institute had acquired 105 acres east of Topeka. Following Washington's model of self-reliance, students built the campus buildings with their own hands, creating structures so well-crafted that some still stand today. The school earned the nickname "Western Tuskegee" for its connection to Washington's Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

Growth & Success

"It created opportunity and created jobs and businesses," says Pearson. "It was a key component in economic development for the Midwest because it was really one of the first Black colleges west of the Mississippi."

The school offered comprehensive programs in agriculture, nursing, printing, tailoring, carpentry, and theology. Students could work to pay their tuition,

The "Old Buff" statue in Topeka's Cushmanberry Park was a gift to Kansas Technical Institute from the class of 1929. The school mascot was the buffalo. The statue was moved to Cushmanberry Park after KTI closed in 1955.



grow food on the campus farm, and learn trades that would sustain them after graduation. By 1925, enrollment had reached 203 students from 26 Kansas counties and nine other states, with pupils coming from as far as Los Angeles and Chicago.

As the decades progressed, the institute - renamed Kansas Vocational School and then finally Kansas Technical Institute (KTI) - expanded its offerings to include auto mechanics, barbering, chef training, cosmetology, and industrial drafting. Students participated in football, basketball, track, chorus, band, and ROTC, creating a vibrant campus culture.

An Abrupt End

As early as 1899, the state of Kansas began supporting the school financially, first with

small donations, and then with progressively larger amounts. In 1919 the Kansas Legislature recognized the school as a regular state school for the education of Black students.

Four years after the Brown vs Topeka BOE ruling, the state closed the school even though it was already integrated with White students, making up more than 25% of the enrollment.

"The distressing thing is it was never intended to close. It was always supposed to be land geared for the betterment of African Americans, and somehow it got out of the hands of the community," Pearson says. "After Brown happened, they were deemed, even though they weren't segregated, they were not deemed integrated enough."

In his resignation letter, KTI President Dr. G. Robert Cotton

**Western University -
Quindaro, Kansas City, KS**
First HBCU in Kansas

Almost 20 years before Kansas Technical Institute opened in Topeka, Western University opened in the Quindaro area of Kansas City, KS.

Established as the Quindaro Freedman's School in 1865, it was the earliest school for African Americans west of the Mississippi River.

In the first three decades of the 20th century,

its music school was recognized nationally as one of the best.

Similar to KTI, the school expanded around the start of the 20th century with an industrial department modeled after Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute.

The school struggled during the depression and closed in 1943. None of its buildings are still standing.



challenged the decision saying closing KTI was unjust:

"I regret that there are some people in this state who are of the opinion that the color of my skin and the background of my racial origin causes this institution to be segregated, while on the other hand considering those of a lighter skin and of a different racial origin operating under parallel conditions as not operating a segregated institution," Dr. Cotton wrote.

By 1961, the state had transferred control to the Dept. of Corrections and dispersed its resources to colleges throughout Kansas. Today, several original KTI buildings, constructed by Black students, are housed in Kansas' only women's prison.

A Community's Loss

The closure of KTI marked a turning point for Black Topeka.

"We saw a strict decline in

Black business ownership and the educational level of African Americans in the Midwest following the closing of that institution," Pitts says.

Historian Pearson explains the broader impact on the Black community locally, saying that any time you lose a social institution that brings the community together, there's a deep loss in tradition.

She says the loss of KTI coincided with other blows to Black Topeka's economic foundation.

"On the heels of the closing of that school, then urban renewal happens, and devastates the Black economic structure," Pearson notes. "Much like what happened in Tulsa, they took out our version of the Black Wall Street in Topeka, and it never fully recovered."

See PRISON Page B7 →

NUNS, from Page BH4 ↓

own food, with diocesan records noting they churned butter three times weekly, saving some back for winter, and the sisters even made altar wine from their vineyard grapes.

By 1892, they cared for 22 boys and taught 92 students at Holy Epiphany School. Under the direction of Sister Baptista Roberts, who served as principal for nearly 50 years, the sisters provided education through the high school level, teaching Latin, French, and other advanced subjects – providing remarkable opportunities for education to Black children in the late 1800s.

Through determination and community support, the orphanage expanded significantly. By 1899, the Guardian Angel

Home for boys moved to the old Whitaker homestead south of Leavenworth. Purchased for \$8,000, the new property didn't have running water or electricity but the 40-acre plot included a large house, outbuildings, a barn, and a well.

The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth donated a cow, calf, and hog. A German farmer named John Vulweiser offered to work their land in exchange for housing, bringing more livestock and his farming expertise. According to the Oblate archives, he asked only for occasional tobacco money and to be remembered in prayers after his death.

In 1903, they added a north wing with a chapel, followed by an east wing in 1908 and 40 additional acres. Their expansion continued in 1905 when they

established the Holy Epiphany Home for destitute girls and in 1911-1912 additional buildings were erected on either side of the Holy Epiphany Church.

A Legacy of Education

The sisters emphasized education as key to their mission. Their teaching left a lasting impact on students like Matilda Rose Dougherty Chase, who graduated in 1938.

“Children were taught the basics and given a good foundation of learning and utmost concern and care was given them by these teachers,” Chase wrote. “The nuns made you realize you could achieve, have self-esteem, and fulfill your potential.”

Former student Eleanor Jackson recalls the sisters ran a strict but excellent school.

Students wearing grade-specific colored ties attended 6 a.m. Mass before classes. While tuition was charged, families paid what they could afford. The sisters never turned away a child for inability to pay.

The quality of education was evident in outcomes.

Children from Holy Epiphany who transferred to public schools were often placed two grades ahead, demonstrating the high academic standards the sisters maintained.

One notable graduate, Father Edward Meyer Prosper, became the first African American to join the Benedictine order in the United States.

Lasting Impact

In 1954 the school and parish were integrated and

were no longer separated on color lines.

The Oblate Sisters of Providence left Leavenworth in 1960 and the orphanage was closed after a growing national movement to place children in foster care instead of orphanages.

The sisters' story is finding new life through efforts like Law's recent play “Divine Resistance: Covenant of Faith,” which brought together adult and youth members of the Leavenworth NAACP to portray this vital piece of Black history.

Additionally, there are artifacts and photos of the Oblate Sisters' mission in the Richard Allen Cultural Center and Museum, at www.RichardAllenCulturalCenter.com or 412 Kiowa St. in

Leavenworth.

Today, the remains of 12 Oblate Sisters rest in Mount Olivet Cemetery on the grounds of the University of Saint Mary in southeast Leavenworth – a permanent reminder of the pioneering Black women who dared to build something from nothing, changing thousands of lives through education and care despite the odds against them.

The impact of their mission continues through their students' descendants and the broader Leavenworth community. They proved that with faith and determination, even a small group of dedicated people could create lasting positive change in the face of poverty and prejudice.

BRADLEY, from Page BH 5 ↓

for livestock, flour and groceries in bulk and at lower prices. By doing this they were able to cut out the middle man and ensure a regular supply of these essential items for African Americans.

In 1898, after identifying the need for an African American hospital, Bradley, along with several prominent members of his community, Bradley was one of four founding members of Douglass Hospital he hospital, in addition to serving as a medical facility, also served as a training college for African American nurses. He served as president of the board of Douglass Hospital for years.

The hospital remained open until 1977.

Bradley also maintained and operated several teams of services that he was able to rent out for passenger transport as well as hauling and delivery. He also started with two other community leaders, one who was a pharmacist, the Home Drug Company, which became one of the largest drugstores of its time. He, along with other community leaders, including Junious Groves and J.W. Jones, in the creation of the Kansas City Ks, KS Casket and Embalming Company.

He was also cofounder, manager and editor of the Wyandotte Echo, a weekly newspaper.

Civil Rights

Early on, Bradley was involved in the national movement for Black civil rights. He was an original member of the African American Council formed in 1898 in Washington D.C. to unify Black leaders and activists in the fight against racial injustice. It was one of the earliest organizations to directly challenge racial discrimination and segregation.

He was also invited by social activities W.E. B. DuBois to be one of the “original twenty-nine” members of the Niagara Movement. The group met in 1905 in Ontario Canada, at the foot of the Niagara Falls to organize for civil rights. The group drew up a manifesto calling for full

civil liberties, abolition of racial discrimination and recognition of human brotherhood. The group was the forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

In Kansas City, KS, he was a founding member of the local NAACP Chapter and helped. He also helped form the Kansas Civic League. He helped sponsor a drive to construct the first monument in the United States to abolitionist John Brown. The statue was placed at the intersection of 27th and Sewell, which at that time was in front of Ward Hall on the campus of Western University in 1911.

In 1913 He was the founder of the Civic League of which

he was founder and president. The Civic League was an organization of 12 Black men and 12 White men who were dedicated to the task of improving race relations in the City. The group was active in promoting Black voter registration and empowering African Americans to be more involved in local government.

On behalf of the Civic League, he sent a letter to the Attorney General of Kansas condemning the showing of the 1916 silent film The birth of the nation. The organization continued to lobby for better social and living conditions for African Americans. The Civic League remains a strong civic organization in the Kansas City Metro area.

His Family

Shortly after law school, Bradley married Mamie Belle Johnson from Lawrence. They had two children, Ruth and Issac Jr., who became a partner in his father's law firm. Issac Jr, was Robinson's father. He died in 1938.

“[Bradley] was the first to achieve what he achieved, but he never wanted to be last,” said Robinson of her grandfather's accomplishments.”

Readers can find more information about Isaac Franklin Bradley's life and work in Robinson's 2018 book “Reasons to Persist: Life and Times of Isaac Franklin Bradley,” is available on Amazon.

PRISON, from Page B6 ↓

Fighting for Return

After decades of research, Pitts discovered a 1910 deed stipulating the land where KTI once stood must be “perpetually used exclusively and solely for the industrial and educational training and development of Negro youth.”

He has petitioned state

lawmakers to honor this legal document and return the property to its original purpose. The deed also states that if the grounds can't be used for educational purposes then the property should be returned to the area Black community.

The precedent exists for the state to return the property. In more than one case, Kansas recently returned land to Native

American tribes based on historical agreements.

“I can't imagine them giving the land back and moving the women's prison,” says Pearson. “But could the right group of people make it happen? We've seen crazier things.”

A New Vision

While awaiting a response from officials, Pitts is working to

establish a new technical school in Topeka's former Payless headquarters, focusing initially on urban farming programs.

“Our community has to do for itself what our ancestors did and provide a quality educational opportunity for the young people of all races, not just Black kids,” Pitts says. “We need to make sure as many of our citizens are getting learning

opportunities as possible, job career opportunities and trades that will allow you to come from the welfare rolls to the tax rolls.”

He envisions an institution that could eventually grow into Kansas' first contemporary HBCU, teaching trades while building cross-cultural understanding.

For now, the prison walls still stand where students once

learned. But Pitts and others refuse to let KTI's legacy remain behind bars, working to ensure its next chapter brings the same opportunities for advancement that made the original “Western Tuskegee” a beacon of Black achievement in Kansas.

“Curtis has started that conversation: We need to decide what we're going to do about that,” said Pearson.



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KC Mayor Accused of Retaliating Against Whistleblower Who Revealed Nonprofit Spending

An attorney for Tom Keating, who volunteered for the nonprofit that has paid for Mayor Quinton Lucas' Super Bowl trips, is demanding an apology and threatening further legal action.

By Allison Kite
Missouri Independent

The whistleblower who revealed financial transactions he felt were potentially unlawful by a nonprofit that bankrolled travel and entertainment for Kansas City's mayor says he is now being targeted with defamation and retaliation.

Tom Keating has worked on ethics compliance for political campaigns for two decades, including for Lucas' campaign and for a nonprofit called the Mayors Corps of Progress For a Greater Kansas City.

Late last year, Keating provided documents to The Missouri Independent detailing how the Mayors Corps was used to finance travel, meals and Kansas City Chiefs tickets for Mayor Quinton Lucas.

The records revealed that the nonprofit Mayors Corps spent more than \$23,000 for Lucas, a staffer and security personnel to attend the 2023 Super Bowl.

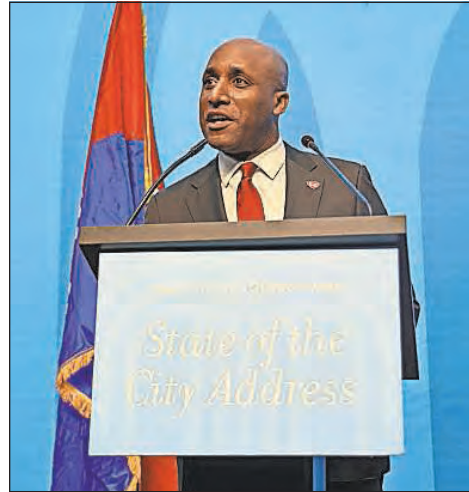
A day after the game, the Mayors Corps took in \$24,000 from a politically connected trade group — a move critics said could violate the city's gift rules, which require elected officials to disclose any gifts they receive worth more than \$200 and bans gifts worth more than \$1,000.

Lucas, a Democrat elected in 2019, has denied any wrongdoing, saying the spending was reviewed by legal counsel and fits within the Mayors Corps' mission to help him promote the city.

He has also suggested in interviews and in a letter from his general counsel that Keating was responsible for the finances of Mayors Corps and that Keating provided slanted information to The Independent.

Keating responded to the mayor's accusations in a letter written this month by his attorney, Max Kautsch, accusing Lucas of retaliating against Keating for serving as a source for the coverage and attacking his First Amendment right to freedom of speech.

Kautsch gave Lucas' office until Feb. 17 to apologize.



KC Mayor Quinton Lucas delivers his State of the City address in February 2024 *CITY OF KANSAS CITY*

"The city can expect a demand from Mr. Keating in the future specifying monetary compensation for his injuries," Kautsch says in the letter. "The nature of that demand will depend in large part on whether the city apologizes to Mr. Keating as outlined above."

He adds: "Thank you for your assistance in correcting this flagrant constitutional violation."

The mayor did not apologize. Neither his office nor an outside law firm that has represented Mayors Corps returned requests for comment.

Super Bowl Trips

In December, The Independent reported that, during Lucas' first term in office, Mayors Corps spent more than \$35,000 on travel, meals and entertainment for him and a top aide, including the Super Bowl trip.

The reporting was based on documents provided by Keating, who volunteered to do compliance for the nonprofit.

Keating raised concerns to Lucas and a top aide at the time of the 2023 Super Bowl trip. He suggested returning the \$24,000 donation, reimbursing the nonprofit for the cost of the trip and paying for the flights, tickets and accommodations through United We Stand PAC, a political action committee that supports Lucas.

Last year, Keating came forward with the documents and concerns about how Mayors Corps funds were being used, saying he had agonized about whether or not to speak up since his departure from the nonprofit in

October 2023.

"The real question about the Mayors Corps paying for Mayor Lucas and staff to attend the 2023 Super Bowl has never been, as Mayor Lucas has suggested, about if the mayor should attend a Super Bowl the Kansas City Chiefs are playing in," Keating said in a statement. "The real question is how it should be paid for and if the public has a right to know who is picking up the tab."

Lucas also attended this year's Super Bowl using funds from the Mayors Corps. His office and attorneys associated with Mayors Corps did not identify recent donors to the nonprofit.

While volunteering for Mayors Corps, Keating was also working on behalf of United We Stand PAC on compliance issues. He was asked at that time by the mayor's then-chief of staff, Morgan Said, to alter descriptions of two expenses on the PAC's quarterly filing to make them more vague, according to a transcribed, recorded phone call provided by Keating.

Keating saw that as an attempt to obscure information about the organization's spending from the public.

One of the expenses, which Said requested be labeled "inaugural reimbursement," was for \$1,694.42 at Halls, a high-end department store in Kansas City, for a tuxedo for Lucas' second inauguration. The other, which Said asked be labeled only as "research," was a \$9,500 payment to Bold Decision Consulting LLC for a poll of 300 Clay County voters that showed 70% were opposed to the idea of a new sales tax to fund a Kansas City Royals baseball stadium in North Kansas City.

At the time the poll was released, it was not clear who paid for it. It was seen by many as an attempt to scuttle any hope of a Clay County stadium deal to ensure the team would land in Jackson County.

Following The Independent's stories, both Keating and news organizations in Missouri received letters from either attorneys for the mayor or Mayors Corps that Kautsch calls "a coordinated attack on First Amendment rights."

Kautsch says the letters are "rife with misstatements" and ruinous to Keating's livelihood and reputation.

Keating received a letter on Dec. 18 from Jon Berkon of the Elias Law Group on behalf of the Mayors Corps. The letter claims it was Keating who approved the 2023 Super Bowl expenditures and that Lucas had offered to

meet with him to discuss any concerns he had raised. Keating did not take Lucas up on that offer, Berkon writes, and "decided to leak confidential financial materials to the press" and "attack the mayor and his staff publicly."

In an email, Keating called the insinuation that he didn't make any efforts to meet with Lucas ridiculous. Lucas offered to meet, Keating said, but never followed up with suggested times for a meeting to take place.

Berkon also wrote that Keating was "the person with the authority" to approve expenses.

That's not true, Kautsch said, since Keating "never had any decision-making authority."

Kautsch, in his letter to the mayor's office, wrote that Lucas also appeared on a KC talk radio show after the coverage and "insinuated that Mr. Keating was solely responsible for making financial decisions for the organizations at issue."

First Amendment Freedoms

Kautsch also takes issue with a letter the mayor's taxpayer-funded general counsel, Gavriel Schreiber, sent to The Independent and KCUR Radio, which republished the stories about the Mayors Corps and United We Stand.

Schreiber's letter, which was also sent on Dec. 18, was shared with numerous members of the media as an attempt to "shift the blame for the Super Bowl reimbursement from Mayor Lucas to Mr. Keating," Kautsch wrote, "and suggesting that anyone involved in bringing Mr. Keating's concerns to light would be subject to legal action."

Schreiber's letter accuses The Independent of inaccuracies in its reporting and requests corrections and an apology. Schreiber claims the stories rely on a "single biased source and demonstrate such reckless disregard for the truth as to potentially constitute actual malice."

"Singling out Mr. Keating is further evidence of the city's true intent in sending the letter to The Independent and KCUR: to retaliate against Mr. Keating," Kautsch wrote.

The Independent replied to Schreiber's letter on Dec. 20 through its attorney, Eric Weslander, who said the letter "can be constructed only as an attempt to blame the messenger, divert attention from the central issues raised by my client's reporting and deter practitioners of ground-breaking, important investigative journalism from doing further digging into the mayor's affairs."



Members of the Wyandotte County Board of Commissioners and guests.

WYCO Holds 33rd Annual Black History Celebration

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

The Unified Government of Wyandotte County in conjunction with their Black History Committee held their 33rd annual Black History and Scholarship Luncheon on Sat. Feb. 15 at Memorial Hall in downtown Kansas City, KS.

The event included scholarship presentations and a panel discussion on the Foundational Pillars of HBCUs and their role in building generational wealth, public service and cultural preservation for over 150 years.

Individual awards included the Community Leader Award presented to Dr. Latoria Chinn and Community Business Award to Clippin 2 Please Barber Shop.

A special tribute to Jerel McGeachy, Jr. who was a presenter at the luncheon in 2023. McGeachy, who was known across the region for his delivery



Members of the Wyandotte County Board of Commissioners and guests.



Attendees inline for a delicious buffet brunch catered by JTS All Occasions Catering.

a rendition of a Martin Luther King speech, and his mother were shot and killed by his father in a murder suicide in April 2024.

Black Archives Celebrates 10th Annual Luncheon

Embracing Blackness: A Healthy Conversation was the theme for the 10th Annual Luncheon sponsored by the Black Archives of Mid-America. The event was held Sat., Feb. 15 at the UMKC Swinney Athletic Center.

The event included an introduction of the Black Archives Youth Coalition Network (BAYCON) a service organization composed of high school and college students whose programming includes community educational workshops, voter registration drives, and other community activism. Thanks to donations, each BAYCON youth graduate received a \$1000 scholarship.

The keynote speaker was Dr. KiKi Baker Barnes, commissioner of the HBCU Athletic Conference, and the first African-American woman to hold this role in the conference and in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics.

Joanne Collins received the Horace M. Peterson III Legacy Award and Shawn Edwards served as master of ceremonies.



The keynote speaker was Dr. KiKi Baker Barnes, commissioner of the HBCU Athletic Conference.



Black Archives of Mid-America Executive Director Dr. Carmaletta Williams, visits with attendees after the luncheon.



Political leader and former KCMO City Councilmember received the Horace M. Peterson III Legacy Award



Members of the Kansas City Chiefs Red Coaters, the community service arm of the Chiefs, were guests at the luncheon.

A New Era for KC Jazz Landmark

Mutual Musicians Foundation names first creative director in its 108-Year History

By **Thomas White**
Kansas City Reporter

After more than a century of all-night jazz sessions and musical history-making, Kansas City's Mutual Musicians Foundation (MMF) has appointed its first creative director.

James D. McGee Sr. will lead the storied institution into its next chapter starting February 21. The appointment comes as the foundation — which has hosted jam sessions with legends like Charlie Parker and Count Basie — approaches its 110th anniversary.

McGee, who moved to Kansas City from East Palo Alto in 1989, brings both musical heritage and strategic vision to the position. His uncle is legendary drummer James Gadson, and McGee has spent decades embedding himself in Kansas City's cultural landscape.

As a musician and producer himself, McGee has balanced preserving tradition with innovation throughout his career. He founded KOJH



James D. McGee Sr., the newly appointed creative director of the Mutual Musicians Foundation, brings decades of experience in music, media, and community leadership.

100.5 LPFM, a radio station broadcasting from 18th & Vine to the world. McGee also co-founded "18th & Vine Lives," which is a social concierge service to support and promote businesses and organizations in the Jazz District.

"James is a transformational leader. He brings together jazz legacy and contemporary styles of music and media," MMF Board Chairman James Hathaway said. "His passion and vision will help guide the foundation to new heights while preserving its historic role as a cornerstone of American culture."

McGee's career spans crucial roles in Kansas City's jazz community. During his time as a

senior manager at the American Jazz Museum, he helped the institution navigate through pandemic challenges while expanding its reach. McGee produced the annual Charlie Parker "In the Yard" celebration showing his ability to honor jazz traditions while creating contemporary cultural connections.

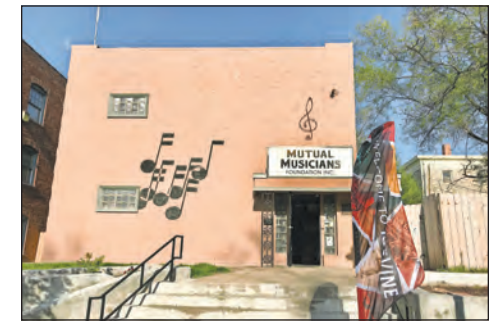
As creative director, McGee will seek to strengthen MMF's role as a living museum while expanding youth and senior programs. His immediate projects include screening a director's cut of "Last of the Blue Devils: The Kansas City Jazz Story" and organizing the 2025 International Jazz Day celebration.

About the Mutual Musicians Foundation

The Mutual Musicians Foundation stands as one of KC's most enduring musical institutions. Founded in 1917 as Local 627 of the American Federation of Musicians, it served as both a union hall and sanctuary for Black musicians.

Its building at 1823 Highland Avenue, designated a National Historic Landmark in 1981, continues to host weekend jam sessions where established artists mentor the next generation.

The MMF is the only establishment in Missouri legally allowed to serve patrons



The Mutual Musicians Foundation at 1823 Highland is a National Historic Landmark preserving the city's rich jazz heritage.

until 6 a.m. on weekends, a privilege earned through its historic role in Kansas City jazz. This tradition began when musicians, after finishing their regular club gigs, would gather at the foundation to jam until dawn. Legends like Count Basie, Charlie Parker, and Jay McShann made these sessions part of the city's musical fabric.

The foundation represents a living connection to Kansas City's golden age of jazz when the city's music scene rivaled New York and Chicago. Today, it maintains its dual mission: preserving this rich heritage while fostering new musical innovations in the Historic 18th & Vine District.

“... if we work together, there is no problem in the world that can stop us.”

— Ewing Marion Kauffman



The Kauffman Foundation provides access to opportunities that help people achieve **financial stability, upward mobility, and economic prosperity** — regardless of race, gender, or geography.

Learn more at

Kauffman.org



WICHITA

Mon., Feb. 24, 7 pm: Screening of Alvin Ailey's "Revelations," Friends University Fine Arts, 2100 W University Ave. Assistant Professor of Dance Heather Eilerts will give a brief history of dance icon Alvin Ailey's life prior to the screening, and there will be time for discussion after the film, an iconic work of dance and gospel. **FREE**

Wed, Feb. 26, 10 - 11 am: Screening of "Color Me Wichita", Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum and Friends of the Historical Museum, 204 S Main St., presented by Sara and Charity Harmon. **FREE**

Thu., Feb. 27, 6 - 8 pm: Black History Trivia Night & Network! in partnership with The Community Voice & ICTUP, Riordan Clinic, 3100 N Hillside. This Black History Month, test your knowledge, meet new people, and enjoy light refreshments. COST \$10 for members (ICTUP &

TCV), \$15 for non-members communityvoiceks.com/black-trivia-night-2025

Sat., March 1, 2 pm: Birthday Celebration Champion League 42, 1212 E 17th St. A celebration to honor Larry Dennis, Mike Gehr, David Jabara, and Bob Lutz - all hitting that Magic 70. **FREE**

Sat., March 1, 11 am - 1 pm: Sister Circle Brunch, Petroleum Club, 100 N. Broadway Suite 900. Kick off Women's History Month with a panel of ladies sharing their thoughts on being "Empowered and Unstoppable." Brunch fun with networking, door prizes, a buffet, a full-service bar, and vibes with DJ Detroit. COST \$40+ <https://bit.ly/3X6nSFM>

Sat., March 8, 11 am: 2025 Shine Awards - International Women's Day Celebration, Hyatt Regency, 400 W. Waterman. Join Storytime Village for this unforgettable experience, celebrating Kansas women who shine. Our honorees for 2025 are:

Gabrielle Altenor, Erin Black, India Boulton, Dr. Yolanda Camarena, Niki Childers, Ricki Ellison, Sheila Ellis- Glasper, Suzy Finn, Teresa Houston, LaTonia Kennedy, Teresa Lovelady, Jacqueline McGilbray, Dr. Beryl New, Mother Vicki Taylor, Dr. Alicia Thompson, Dr. Valerie Thompson, and Alexis Smith. COST \$100 StorytimeVillage.org/shine2025

Sat., March 8, 10 am - 2 pm: Third Annual Break Room Conference for Women, Wichita State University - Marcus Welcome Center, 1845 N. Fairmount. This is more than just a conference; it's a life-changing experience you won't forget. The registration fee covers your conference compass and sessions, lunch, an event treasure kit, and an unforgettable day of God-inspired Grace. COST \$45 <https://break-room2025.eventbrite.com>

Sat., March 8, 10 am - 3 pm: National Women Empowered Market, Wichita Recovery Hub, 120 S. Ida.

Shopping on purpose and community fun on International Women's Day. With women-owned businesses and nonprofits working with women, and a day of learning about great missions and cultures. What you can expect: Fair/Direct Trade Goods, Local Made Artwork & Jewelry, Foods & Snacks (featuring Lady Burrito LLC), Gifts & Home Décor, Make & Take Workshops. Fun for all ages. **FREE**

Sat., March 8, 3-5 pm: Black Ink Theatre Company's Writers' Group, Wichita Advanced Learning Library, 711 W. 2nd St. Come fellowship with kindred spirits and like-minded creatives, we will talk and write. If you have works in progress (plays and/or screenplays), bring them. If not, don't fret, there's something for everyone. **FREE**

Sun., March 9, 12 pm: Reggae Sunday, Central Standard Brewing, 156 N Greenwood. Reggae riddims, jerk chicken, coconut rice, vibes. **FREE**

Sun., March 9, 1-5 pm: Free Sunday Admission, Sedgwick County Historical Museum, 204 S. Main. Since 2022, SCHM has received a generous gift from the Ruth Spooner Stone Charitable Trust, Intrust Bank, to make this possible. Explore local history in one of America's finest museums, occupying the original 1890 Wichita City Hall. Come experience dozens of exhibits featuring thousands of artifacts illuminating our unique local history. Visit the museum store for books, local souvenirs and gift items. **FREE**

KANSAS CITY

Thu., Feb. 27, 5-7:30 pm: "Black Men, The Courts, And The Constitution," virtual event online, Eventbrite. An insightful and powerful discussion on the pivotal role Black men have played in shaping fundamental rights for Americans through Landmark Supreme Court Decisions. Session 1: Examine the impact Black men have had in advocating for constitutional

rights. Session 2: A discussion with two phenomenal Black men who took on the legal system to successfully advocate in the fight for constitutional rights. Featured panelists: Carl King, the inspiration for the biographical award-winning film "Crown Heights" after successfully fighting for the release of his best friend, Colin Warner, an 18-year-old Black man who was wrongfully convicted; and Ras Omel Wado Morgan, a prose litigant who successfully filed and won a federal lawsuit against NYPD officers for civil rights violations. **FREE** tinyurl.com/mrjzfhke

Thu., Feb. 27, 9 am - 12:30 pm: Hack The Dream KC 2025, Central Library, 14 W. 10th St. A comprehensive look at the social, cultural, historical, and political contexts that determine digital equity. See how solutions can be identified through the lens of tech innovators and community partners. A social impact hack-a-thon that celebrates Black History Month, the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the vitally important cause of Digital Equity and Bridging the Digital Divide. COST \$50 <https://bit.ly/410WtWR>

Fri., Feb. 28, 7-11:30 pm: "Rock Is Black" Concert with Malek Azrael and the VibeZ & more, Zhou B Art Center, 1801 E 18th St. A groundbreaking concert event, "The Rock is Black," dedicated to uplifting and showcasing underrepresented Black artists in the rock music genre. This unique occasion serves as the release concert for the highly anticipated indie rock EP by Malek Azrael and the VibeZ. Other guests: Frankie Shorez and Mercy Fire, Jamogi and the Jammers, and Stephonne. COST \$15 <https://bit.ly/4hIaYpA>

Fri., Feb. 28, 6-9 pm: Think To Win - Black Future Month: Your Brand Is Your New Family Heirloom, Equal Minded Cafe & Event Center, 4327 Troost Ave. This panel is for the movers and builders who want to create something their kids and grandkids can eat. We're

breaking down: How to build a brand that stands the test of time; Investment plays that turn income into assets; Educational blueprints to pass down knowledge, not just money; The mindset shift from survival to legacy-building. COST \$10

Sat., March 1, 2-5 pm: HBCU Experience: Homecoming Edition - Lincoln College Preparatory Academy, 2111 Woodland Ave. This youth event aims to empower and inspire young individuals by providing them with insights into the opportunities available at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and foster a sense of pride in our heritage while encouraging educational pursuits among our youth. The "HBCU Experience: Homecoming Edition" event is designed for students of all ages. COST \$5

Sat., March 1, 11 am - 1 pm: Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc, 2025 Founders Day, The Gathering KC, 2800 E. Linwood Blvd. To celebrate the founding of sisterhood and honor 22 trailblazing Founders. Speaker: Jazmyn Ferguson, Esq., past regional representative. Theme: "What's Next: Delta's Moving Forward With Strength and Fortitude." Attire: Business attire (dressy) - suggested colors: red, silver, and white. COST \$75 <https://bit.ly/4k3dVm2>

Wed., March 5, 6-8 pm: Vivid Visions - Women In The Kansas City Jazz Scene, Folly Theater, 300 W 12th St. Women comprise only 10% of the workforce. Join Kansas City Jazz ALIVE for a Vivid Visions panel discussion with moderator Steve Kraske. COST \$20 bit.ly/3CCCfdG

Sat., March 8, 1-5:30 pm: Discover Your Roots with Genealogy, The Black Archives of Mid-America, 1722 E. 17th St. Session 1: Introduction to ancestry.com with Sherry Golden. Session 2: Newspapers and African American genealogy research with Preston Washington. **FREE** - register at <https://form.jotform.com/250134755225048>

A HEARTWARMING PLAY THAT EXPLORES THE COMPLEXITIES OF FAMILY, SACRIFICE AND RESILIENCE.



BY NATHAN LOUIS JACKSON
DIRECTED BY FRANCOIS BATTISTE

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Image: Robert E. Coppage III (left) & Melvin Abston, in KCRep's 2025 production of *Broke-ology*. Photo: Don Ipack

Kansas City Repertory Theatre is the professional theatre in residence at UMKC

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Beyond the Gates: New Soap Opera Debuts Monday

CBS has teamed up with the NAACP to make TV history. Together, they've developed *The Gates*, the first daytime soap with a predominantly Black cast since 1989's *Generations*.

CBS has teamed up with the NAACP to make TV history. Together, they've developed *The Gates*, the first daytime soap with a predominantly Black cast since 1989's *Generations*.

The series, which premieres Mon., Feb. 24 on CBS, follows the lives of a wealthy Black family in a posh community.

"The Gates will be everything we love about daytime drama, from a new and fresh perspective," said Sheila Ducksworth, president of the CBS Studios NAACP venture, in a statement. "This series will salute an audience that has been traditionally underserved, with the potential to be a groundbreaking moment for broadcast television. With multidimensional characters, juicy storylines, and Black culture front and center, *The Gates* will have impactful representation, one of the key touchstones of the venture."

At the center of the community are the Duprees, led by genteel patriarch Vernon (played by Clifton Davis), a retired senator, and fierce matriarch Anita (Tamara Tunie), a former singer. Alongside daughters Nicole (Daphne Duplaix), a high-achieving philanthropist and psychiatrist, and Dani (Karla Mosley), a free-spirited former model-turned-momager, the multi-generational Duprees are considered a powerful and prestigious family and the "very definition of Black royalty," per the show's logline — but



Clifton Davis plays Vernon Dupree, a retired senator and Tamara Tunie plays Anita, the fierce matriarch of the Dupree family.

beneath the opulence reside juicy secrets.

Notable firsts surround the new soap: It's the first new entry of the genre since *Passions* premiered in 1999, as well as the first to center on Black characters since *Generations*, which centered on two Chicago families, the white Whitmores and Black Marshalls.

Sterling K. Brown in *Paradise is Getting Good* Reviews for 8 Episode Series

Fans of "This is Us" are finding "Paradise" as a thrilling replacement. The eight episode murder mystery stars Sterling K Brown who people grew to love in "This is Us."

The show, from Hulu, bounces between two main timelines: the present, when our characters live in an eerily cheery gated community of sorts, and five years ago, when President Cal Bradford is about to reluctantly start his second term. What he really wants to do is retire and chill out.



Sterling K. Brown

Relatable! Brown is Xavier Collins, a stoic father and dutiful wife-guy whose integrity and intelligence put him at the top of Cal's to-hire list five years ago. Imagine Xavier's horror and dismay in the present day, when someone murders Cal, despite the intensity of his security detail.

However, get ready, this is not just a political thriller. It's a political thriller with a twist at the end of its pilot. The show was created by Dan Fogelman, who also created "This Is Us," and that show's echoes ring out clearly here: The collage of timelines, the weeping over one's family, Brown as leading man.

AJ & Angela Jones

AJ and Angela Jones of Wichita have built a beautiful family together, raising two children who have blessed them with 5 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. They have been married since Nov. 24, 1979.

AJ was born in Chicago and Angela is originally from Texas, but both were raised in Wichita, AJ was a radio DJ for many years, and Angela was self-employed, owning her own business.

When did you meet? We met back in 1976 at a party at the old YMCA on North Cleveland — I was 16 and he was 17.

Tell us about your first

date. Our first date was at the Wichita State University Art Museum to see the wax statues. It was different but fun — we laughed, talked, and got to know each other in a unique way.

How did you know he/she was the one? AJ said he knew I was the one from the moment he first saw me. For me, it took a little longer to be convinced. Over time, his kindness, patience, and the way he genuinely cared for me won me over. Eventually, I realized I couldn't imagine life without him.

Who's more social? AJ is definitely the more social one between us. He loves meeting new people, striking up conversations, and making connections wherever he goes. Whether he's at a community event, or just out and about, he's always the one who naturally draws people in.



Who's the neat freak? AJ is the neat freak in our relationship. He loves everything to be in its proper place. He likes things to be just right, and I have to admit, it helps keep us both on track!

What chore does your spouse hate doing the most? Angela really doesn't like cleaning in general. She'd much rather focus on other tasks, but when it has to be done, she gets through it — just not with much enthusiasm!

Who does the cooking? Angela does most of the cooking because she enjoys preparing meals and making sure everyone is well-fed. Cooking is her way of bringing everyone together.

Who is more romantic? AJ is definitely the more romantic one between us. Whether it's remembering important dates

or simply making sure I feel loved every day. His thoughtful gestures and affectionate nature make it clear that romance comes naturally to him.

Where is your favorite weekend destination? We'd really love to go on a cruise. There's just something so cool about being out on the ocean. We could enjoy the food, the activities, and just the fun of exploring new spots together.

What song is on each of your romantic playlist? DeBarge - "I Like It"

What is your favorite couple song? Frankie Beverly and Maze - "Golden Time Of Day"

What kind of movies do you like watching together? We watch boxing together.

Words of wisdom from both of you for other couples.

Angie: Be committed, pray, always be patient. AJ: I appreciate how much she does to take care of me, especially since my stroke.

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In Memory of

Haden L Henderson

June 15, 1938 - January 20, 2025

Haden was born on June 15, 1938, in Columbia, Missouri. Haden Henderson married his high school sweetheart, Shirley Mae Thorton, on May 31, 1966. Shortly thereafter, Haden and his new bride left their families in Columbia and relocated to Wichita, KS, to pursue their career goals and to continue his education at Wichita State University. Haden and Shirley excitedly welcomed the birth of their first and only child, a daughter, Leigh Ann. Their marriage lasted for 43 years. Haden joined the Wichita Police Department in the Spring 1969 where he served with dedication for 21 years, until he retired on January 25, 1990. He began his career as a patrol officer. In 1980, Haden was promoted to a Detective, and he rose up in rank to Captain. Captain Haden became the first Black police officer with the Wichita Police Department to receive the Silver Wreath of Valor for his bravery and self-sacrifice in the line of duty. Haden is survived by his daughter Leigh Ann Henderson and his granddaughter Morgan Temple. Haden's celebration of his life was held on Sat., Feb. 1, 2025 at Memorial Park Mortuary and Cemetery in Columbia, MO.

KC Rep For All Bringing 'Broke-ology' to the Community



Robert E. Coppage III, Melvin Abston, and Raffael Sears in KCRep's 2025 production of BROKE-OLGY - PHOTO BY DON IPOCK

Free community shows run March 6 - 16

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

When Nathan Louis Jackson wrote "Broke-ology" as a Juilliard student in 2007, he set his story in the working-class neighborhoods of Kansas City, KS, where he grew up. Now, the production—that ran at New York's Lincoln Center—returns to the streets that inspired it.

Following its ticketed run at Copaken Stage (Feb. 11 - March 2), "Broke-ology" will tour community venues across the metro area. This free program, KCRep for All, brings professional theater directly to neighborhoods through March 16.

Director Francois Battiste, who performed in the original cast, says this play is uniquely suited for a free community tour. "When we go out into the community, we strip down all the pomp and circumstance to deliver this story," says Battiste. "That's what people are going to hang on to - the heart of what Nathan Louis Jackson was writing about."

Each performance includes

discussions with the cast and crew. While the production contains strong language and is recommended for ages 14 and up, its messages speak across generations.

The play gets its name from a term coined by the character Ennis to describe "the study of being broke." The play follows the King family and two brothers facing a dilemma. One pursues academic dreams in environmental science while the other prepares for fatherhood. Both must decide how to care for their ailing father and honor their late mother's legacy.

For this production, Battiste cast primarily local actors who understand the play's cultural geography. KC locals Robert E. Coppage III and Raffael Sears portray brothers Ennis and Malcolm, while Teonna Wesley appears as their mother Sonia in pivotal flashbacks. Broadway veteran Melvin Abston plays William King.

Broke-Ology Community Shows

Performances are free and

open to the public, with limited staging, as part of the KCRep for All program.

March 6 – 7 p.m.

Washington High School, KCK

March 7 – 2 p.m.

Beatrice Lee Community Center, KCK

March 8 – 1 p.m.

Johnson County Central Library, Overland Park, KS

March 12 – 1 p.m.

North East Branch Library, KCMO

March 13 – 6 p.m.

West Wyandotte Library, KCK

March 14 – 6 p.m.

Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center, KCMO

March 16 – 2 p.m.

Kansas City Community College Performing Arts Building, KCK

Closed Performances at:

- Don Bosco Senior Center
- Morning Star Youth & Family Life Center
- Veteran's Community Project

MBE/WBE INVITATION TO BID

JE Dunn Construction has been awarded as the Construction Manager at Risk for the Kansas City Public School Project – Carver & KCMSA Elementary Renovations and requests your bid proposal for applicable material and/or labor.

The project consists of renovations to 2 elementary schools.

- George Washington Carver is located at 4600 Elmwood Ave, Kansas City, MO 64130.

- KCMSA is located at 4848 Woodland Ave, Kansas City, MO 64110.

Both locations will be treated as 1 project and have similar scopes consisting of interior selective demolition, new administrative spaces, and secure entries. Upgraded lighting, door hardware, exterior windows, and site fencing is also included.

This is a summer project that will turn over prior to the school year starting in August (2025).

KCPS has goals of MBE (15%) and WBE (10%) participation.

A pre-bid meeting will be held virtually and in-person at JE Dunn, 1001 Locust, KCMO 64106 on 2/20/25 at 2:00 PM, followed by a site walk at each location, starting KCMSA at 4PM. A link will be sent out prior to the meeting.

Bids will be received until 12:00 pm on 3/4/25. All bids should be submitted electronically thru Building Connected website: buildingconnected.com. where bid documents are also available.

All bids are to be in strict accordance with the Bidding Documents and all related Bidding Requirements and Subcontract Documents. JE Dunn reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any irregularities or award the work to someone other than the low bidder.

JE Dunn invites subcontractors to call with questions concerning work segmentation, work and contract requirements, or the form of proposal requested. Please note that this project has MBE/ WBE participation goals and prevailing wage requirements.



Questions should be directed to:

Andrew.Higbie@jedunn.com and Austin.Panko@jedunn.com

EOE: minority/female/disability/veteran/sexual orientation/gender identity



Maurice Washington Sr.

Dec. 12, 1960 - Feb. 7, 2025

Service will be held at 11 a.m. Feb. 28 at Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 220 W. 13th St.

Bernard Joseph Carley

Sept. 6, 1952 - Feb. 5, 2025

Service was held Feb. 19 at Jackson Mortuary Chapel.

Edna Mary Brown

May 5, 1938 - Feb. 4, 2025

Service was held Feb. 21 at Greater St. Mary's Baptist Church.

Melinda Kay Randle

June 4, 1981 - Feb. 3, 2025

Service was held Feb. 20 at Jackson Mortuary Chapel.

Betty L. Childers

Feb. 26, 1931 - Feb. 11, 2025

Service will be held at 11 a.m. March 7 at Jackson Mortuary Chapel, 1125 E. 13th St.

Thomas Gant

June 23, 1941 - Feb. 9, 2025

Service will be held at 11 a.m. March 1, at Jackson Mortuary Chapel, 1125 E. 13th St.

Claudell Pennington

Sept. 23, 1953 - Feb. 8, 2025

Celebration of Life details will be announced by the family at a later date.

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Wichita Public Schools **ZERO-RATE-CHANGE** Bond Proposal

EARLY VOTING NOW OPEN • ELECTION DAY TUESDAY, FEB. 25



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Everyone knows our kids need and deserve up-to-date schools. Voting "yes" for Wichita Public School's **ZERO-RATE-CHANGE** Bond Proposal will make that happen. New school facilities will help our kids prepare for a brighter future. And they will lead to stronger neighborhoods and be a source of pride for all of us.

WE OWE IT TO OUR KIDS AND OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

YOUR Yes Vote Matters!

This will be a low-turnout election, and every yes vote will help our kids and community! Early voting is available now. **Election Day is Tuesday, Feb. 25,** polls open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

LEARN MORE AT [YESFORWICHITAKIDS.COM](https://www.yesforwichtakids.com)