



The Woke Express

**BIG BETHEL SOCIAL
ACTION COMMISSION**

June 2024

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Good morning Woke Nation,

I am happy to say that we are one step closer to finalizing the slate for November's ballot. There are some critical runoff races that we MUST show up for to insure we are putting the best candidates forward. In 2018, Stacey Abrams lost a very close race (54,723 votes = 1.4%) to Brian Kemp partly due to low voter turnout in the communities of color. Many people indicated that they were unaware that a runoff was occurring. Let me help you out. At the back of this newsletter, you will find the runoff candidates for the national, state and local levels (most common) as well as the updated dates to remember.

It has been said that "The health of a country is governed by the integrity of its office-bearers." The political climate of today definitely challenges this declaration. There are issues of impropriety ranging from indictments of a former president (historic), to a Georgia January 6th participant advancing to the GOP runoff for U.S. House District 2 and most recently, the Supreme Court.

The Daily Bread series gives insight on a good leader. It references Psalm 72 and says that the ideal leader is a person of justice and integrity (v.1-2), defends the vulnerable (v.4), serves the needy (v.12-13), and stands against oppression (v.14)

Over the course of the next five months, we will do our best to keep you informed on issues pertinent to your vote. We will provide the latest in candidate platforms, election law changes, host voter registration drives and candidate forums. We ask that you continue to support us and each other as we work to **GET OUT THE VOTE.**

In the meantime, you can get a jump start by familiarizing yourself with "Project 2025 (<https://project2025.org>)" and visiting the Joe Biden for President website (<https://joebiden.com>). These sites will give you the overarching policy agendas for the respective national parties (Republican and Democratic).

Please continue to pray for our current government officials at home and abroad that they will rule with compassion and fairness for all citizens under their jurisdiction.

Humbly,

Editor-in-Chief

June Health Awareness

Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month - Wear purple to reflect the campaign's message and look out for the hashtag #ENDALZ.

National Aphasia Awareness Month - The National Aphasia Association help drive this campaign, raising awareness of this language disorder that strokes usually cause. Connect using the hashtag #TakeAphasiaAction.

Cataract Awareness Month: Prevent Blindness coordinates this campaign to help people identify the signs of cataracts and get treatment.

Hernia Awareness Month: The purpose of National Hernia Awareness Month is to raise public knowledge of the warning signs and latest treatment options available.

National Safety Month: The National Safety Council promote this campaign, focusing on saving lives and preventing injuries. Areas of focus include mental health, ergonomics, building a safety culture, and driving.

Myasthenia Gravis Awareness Month: Also called MG Awareness Month, the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of America drive awareness around this condition, which causes weakness and easy fatigue of voluntary muscles.

National Congenital Cytomegalovirus (CMV) Awareness Month: CMV is the most common infectious cause of congenital birth defects.

Scoliosis Awareness Month: The Scoliosis Research Society campaign to raise awareness about detecting and treating scoliosis early, plus the importance of community support for people with the condition.

National Scleroderma Awareness Month: The Scleroderma Foundation aims to raise awareness of the symptoms and impact of this condition and provide information on how to support research into treatments.

Men's Health Month: This campaign aims to draw attention to preventable conditions in men and encourage men to seek help and support for health issues.



When Fani Came to Big Bethel

Big Bethel AME Church is an icon in the City of Atlanta, and indeed, in the State of Georgia. Of late, it is becoming an icon in the country because of the political limelight it is in since District Attorney Fani Willis came to speak. She brought the message during our Martin Luther King Day worship experience, and it was a moment I will not forget.

What Madam D.A. spoke about may or may not have been legally appropriate, as it has caused backlash and criticism from a member of the Bench; it may or may not have been the perfect time for such comments; it could be that it had unfavorable political ramifications. I'm not able to respond to any of those points. But what it was, and how it was received by the congregation, was a heartfelt testimony of courage and faith.

Willis talked about her journey from childhood to her current position as district attorney of Fulton County. Yes, she mentioned issues that she was facing that were challenging her very core. Yet, her most important message was that she had come a long way and that God had made it so. She talked about how her faith had been shaken, how her family had been threatened, how she had faced despair and loneliness, and how she had questioned the very God she served.

As I listened, my heart was deeply troubled because I wasn't sure if she was about to admit that she felt defeated. At times, the pure sadness that I sensed coming from her made me alarmed. Thank God, though, my concerns were unfounded. I had nothing to fear! For by the time the message ended, after admitting to failures, stubbornness, and mistakes, Willis declared, that through obedience and commitment to God, our very human efforts can be transformed into "something extraordinary."

Looking back, I realize that the lesson to embrace here is that it wasn't so much as what she had to say, as much as the fact that she had *somewhere to say it*. It was apparent to me that in our sanctuary, she felt safe, and she was. The congregation received her with warmth and excitement. In our sanctuary, she felt respected, and she was. It didn't matter whether we agreed with all of her views or voted for her; we honored who she was. In our sanctuary, she felt accepted, and she was. Ours was not to judge her, but to listen to what she had to say.

It brought to mind how we have responded when others have come to share with us including our Jewish brother and senator, Jon Ossoff. He commented on how welcomed we had made him feel. It didn't matter that his religious beliefs were different from ours, all that mattered was that we, as Christian believers, did not discriminate. He felt at home.

The public can say what it will; the court can say what it will; politicians can say what they will. It really doesn't matter to me. Because as a Black woman, a member of the clergy and a congregant listening to our district attorney that day, I couldn't be prouder of the AME tradition, my Big Bethel Church family and most of all, the Spirit of the Lord that resided in our hearts.

The Reverend Monica C. Jones, PhD

Celebrating Dad

To the man who's always there,
With strength and love beyond compare,
In every smile, in every tear,
Your guiding hand is always near.

Through life's journey, come what may,
Your wisdom leads me day by day.
With grateful hearts, we celebrate,
A father's love that's truly great.

Happy Father's Day!

Happy
Father's
Day



SUPREME COURT APPOINTMENTS MATTER

Flying the American flag upside down was historically used as a sign of dire distress to life or property. Over the past decade or so, it has been used for more divisive purposes. It has been reported that one of the Justices has displayed an upside-down flag at one home and the "Appeal to Heaven" flag at another as symbolic gestures in support of Christian Fundamentalists and government insurrectionists of January 6th.

The integrity of the highest court in the land matters as they are, for intents and purposes, the gatekeepers of the Constitution. With no legal oversight currently in place, blatant acts of disregard for democracy are shameful.

There are now two known Justices who have substantiated ties to the tragedy of January 6, 2021 that are currently reviewing two cases before the courts. Impartiality seems like a bridge too far. The flags have since been removed, however, that doesn't change the conviction of one's heart.

Although our economy, gun violence, equal justice, etc. are important issues and real to each voter, we need to think bigger. The next president will likely have the opportunity to seat the next two Supreme Court Justices. In 2016, Barack Obama cautioned that the elected President would have three Supreme Court appointments. Eight years later, we can see the impact of that election on our social freedoms and other rights.

Let's not sleep on this monumental opportunity in 2024!



The Black Family: National Family Day



Mother's Day and Father's Day are special occasions that our community celebrates each year. We recently celebrated Mother's Day this May and are preparing to celebrate Father's Day in June. Traditionally, Mother's Day is a significant celebration in the African American community. Church attendance is notably higher as adult children come to church to be with their mothers, and local restaurants are filled to capacity. Father's Day is also celebrated, though perhaps not as extensively as Mother's Day, it remains important to many in the African American community.

However, the celebration of Family Day has been largely neglected, making it virtually nonexistent in the African American community. This needs to change, as family holds great importance in our lives. Unfortunately, stable family structures are becoming rare within the Black community.

Consider this statistic: In the 1960s, 75% of Black families had both a mother and father. Today, only 37% of Black families have both biological parents. While some studies suggest that Black children in single-parent households fare just as well as those in two-parent households, my observations indicate that Black children raised by both parents tend to do better in life. Additionally, statistics show that income is higher in two-parent

African American homes, and children in these homes are less likely to live in poverty. A child without both biological parents is 3.5 times more likely to experience poverty.

This information may not be new to you, but I was particularly struck by this statistic: Over the past half-century, African Americans have become the most unmarried group in the nation. More than two out of three Black women are unmarried, and they are more than twice as likely as white women to never marry. This marriage gap extends beyond socioeconomic status, affecting even affluent and college-educated African Americans. This trend negatively impacts Black children and adults and threatens the stability and growth of the Black middle class.

One reason for the decline in marriage is that as Black women have advanced economically and educationally, Black men have lagged behind. Nearly twice as many Black women graduate from college each year compared to Black men. Consequently, many college-educated Black women remain unmarried or marry less educated and lower-earning men. In fact, half of college-educated Black wives are more educated than their husbands.

This disparity raises important questions: Why is there such a gap between the success of Black women and their male counterparts? Are we raising our sons to be athletes rather than scholars? Or do Black men face fewer opportunities than Black women? These statistics need to be understood and addressed. We must work to strengthen and increase the number of two-parent Black families.

Finally, do we know the date of National Family Day? Let us celebrate it with vigor and pride.



Stop the delays in Fani Willis's election interference case

by Georgia AME Bishop Reginald T. Jackson

For many months, the Fulton County election interference case has been delayed by allegations that never made much sense. Now the case is being delayed again as a Georgia court agreed to hear an appeal of a lower-court decision in the case against former president Donald Trump and more than a dozen co-defendants.

If the defendants in the case had their way, Fulton County District Attorney Fani T. Willis would have been disqualified from prosecuting the case. Thankfully, that did not go as the defendants in the election interference case planned.

The defendants alleged that Willis had a conflict of interest because she was involved in a relationship with the special prosecutor. The defendants claimed that Willis somehow benefited financially from this relationship.

A Georgia Superior Court judge, Scott McAfee, correctly ruled against these claims. The district attorney did not violate any laws, benefit financially from the relationship or harm the case in any way.

I was in the courtroom as the salacious allegations were heard. From my vantage point, I saw a great deal of irony that somebody ought to say something about.

What bothered me the most was the criticism the district attorney Willis received from the defendants' attorneys for her visit to Big Bethel AME Church, one of more than 500 churches under my supervision. I was in attendance for Willis's speech. Specifically, the defendants claimed that Willis's remarks were "racist." That is utterly false. I shook my head in the courtroom when this claim was made and immediately saw the irony when the chief defendant, Trump, has claimed that three prosecutors who have charged him are racist: Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, New York Attorney General Letitia James and Willis.

Watching the action from the courtroom, I was offended by how the defendant's lawyers treated Willis's private life. She conducted a thorough investigation, followed the leads, obtained the evidence and assembled a grand jury that decided to recommend

indictments. The grand jury recommended 38 people be indicted, yet she chose to indict only 18. Because of this work, the defendants' lawyers dragged her reputation through the mud to punish her and make her pay for doing the right thing. They attacked the private life of a good, fair, honest person. They failed to make their case and lost.

Finally, I also saw a clearly partisan effort against our justice system. After Willis announced the indictments, the Georgia General Assembly, by party-line votes and with the governor's signature, passed legislation allowing it to scrutinize and handicap prosecutors.

Yet again, another irony. Though the state legislature can now question Willis's actions, no one has investigated or questioned the district attorney of Coffee County. In that strongly Republican County, blatant and recorded election irregularities occurred involving people associated with the Trump campaign. Why hasn't a state Senate committee, the Georgia attorney general, the State Election Board or anybody investigated these apparent irregularities? Why hasn't the lieutenant governor of Georgia been held accountable for his actions as a "fake elector" in the 2020 presidential election? This matter was referred to the state prosecuting attorney more than 18 months ago.

Willis, a person of deep faith who is fiercely committed to justice, has been a pawn in an effort to distract and delay the indictment and trial of Trump and co-defendants. Willis should be commended for her courage, determination and persistence to seek justice. For staying focused on what matters and doing her job as best she can.

This has gone on too long. I hope the Georgia appeals court decides quickly so that the case can continue in Fulton County and voters can have the evidence they need before the November election.

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Social Action in Georgia: Upcoming Events in June

June is shaping up to be a vibrant month for social action in the state of Georgia. From rallies advocating for social justice to community service projects, citizens across the state are gearing up to make a difference. Here's a look at some key events and initiatives to watch out for.

1. Juneteenth Celebrations

On June 21st-23rd, communities across Georgia will commemorate Juneteenth, the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Atlanta's Juneteenth Parade and Music Festival will take place in Piedmont Park, featuring educational exhibits, music, food vendors, and a parade celebrating African American culture and history.

2. Environmental Clean-Up Campaigns

Various environmental groups are organizing clean-up drives to maintain Georgia's natural beauty. Volunteers will gather to remove trash and debris from area, helping to preserve the community and promote environmental awareness.

3. Community Health Fairs

Several health fairs are planned throughout the state to promote wellness and provide essential health services to underserved communities.

4. Racial Justice and Equity Workshops

Following a series of successful workshops earlier in the year, the Georgia Coalition for Racial Justice is organizing a series of educational sessions throughout June. These workshops aim to engage community members in discussions about systemic racism, equity, and strategies for advocacy. The sessions will be held in various locations, including Atlanta, Macon, and Savannah.

5. Food Drives and Distribution Events

Food insecurity remains a critical issue in many parts of Georgia. Organizations like the Atlanta Community Food Bank are planning extensive food drives and distribution events.

6. Youth Empowerment Programs

Youth advocacy groups are hosting events to empower young people and encourage civic engagement.

PARTICIPATE

PARTICIPATE

PARTICIPATE

2024 Runoff for General Primary / Nonpartisan / Federal Offices Election Dates to Remember

Early Voting - June 10th through June 14th

Runoff Absentee Ballot Request Deadline – Friday, June 7th

In-person Runoff Voting – Tuesday, June 18th

National - Congressional

U.S. House District 2 - Republicans Chuck Hand and A. Wayne Johnson

U.S. House District 3 - Republicans Brian Jack and former state Senate Majority Leader Mike Dugan

U.S. House District 14 - Democrats Clarence Blalock and Shawn Harris.

State

Senate

District 7 (Duluth) - Republican candidates Fred Clayton and J. Gregory Howard.

District 34 (Riverdale) to replace Valencia Seay - Democrats Valencia Stovall and Kenya Wicks.

District 38 (Atlanta) to replace Horacena Tate - Democrats RaShaun Kemp and Ralph Long, III.

District 55 (Stone Mountain) to replace Senate Minority Leader Gloria Butler - Democrats Randal Mangham and Iris Knight-Hamilton.

House of Representatives – District 96 (**Gwinnett**), Arlene Beckles and Sonia Lopez.

County by County

Clayton County (Dem)

Sheriff - Incumbent Sheriff Levon Allen and Clayton County Commission Chairman Jeff Turner.

Commission Chair - Commissioner Alieka Anderson and former Tax Commissioner Terry Baskin.

Commission District 3 - Tashe Allen and Attania Jean-Funny

Runoffs are also expected in commission races for Districts 1.

Cobb Commission (Dem):

Commission District 2 - Jaha Howard and Taniesha Whorton.

DeKalb County (Dem):

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) - Former Commissioners Lorraine Cochran-Johnson and Larry Johnson run to replace outgoing CEO Michael Thurmond.

Commission District 4 - Chakira Johnson and Lance Hammonds.

State Court Judge (Purdom) - Yolanda Mack and Dionne McGee.

Board of Education District 5 - Tiffany Hogan and Donna Priest-Brown

Fulton County:

Commission District 4 – Incumbent Natalie Hall and Moraima “Mo” Ivory.

Gwinnett County:

Board of Education District 1 - Incumbent Karen Watkins and Rachel Stone.

Board of Education District 3 - Steve Gasper and Shana V. White.

Superior Court Judge Gwinnett Circuit (Beyers) – Regina Matthews and Tuwanda Rush Williams.

Secretary of State Website (My Voter Page):

<https://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/MVP/mvp.do>



* Indicates Required Field

* First Initial * Last Name

* County * Date of Birth

SELECT AN OPTION MM/DD/YYYY

SUBMIT

Use the MVP Log In to check your

1. Voter registration status
2. Mail-In application and ballot status
3. Poll location
4. Early voting locations
5. Elected Officials
6. Registration information on file with the county office
7. Sample ballot for the upcoming election
8. Provisional Ballot status

From this site, Voters can access/update critical voter information:

- **Voter Registration**
- **Confirm Voter status (maintained by local county office)**
- **Change/Update Voter Information**
- **Polling location Information (directions, hours, precinct cards, etc.)**
- **Absentee Ballot Information**
- **Early Voting Information**
- **SAMPLE BALLOTS**
- **Elected Officials Information**
- **Much More!**

Voter Tips/Reminders

1. Be sure your state issued ID matches your voter registration name

Acceptable forms of identification if you do not have a Georgia Driver's License or State Identification Card Number

Identification with your photograph:

- United States Passport
- Georgia voter identification card
- Other valid identification card issued by a branch, department, agency, or entity of the State of Georgia, any other state, or the United States authorized by law to issue personal identification
- United States military identification card
- Employee identification card issued by any branch, department, agency, or entity of the United States government, Georgia state government, or Georgia county, municipality, board, authority, or any other entity of the state of Georgia
- Tribal identification card

Documents that show your name and address:

Current utility bill ~ Bank statement ~ Paycheck
Government check ~ Other government document

2. Review the sample ballot (if applicable) on the Secretary of State website
3. Take advantage of Early Voting and Absentee Ballots
4. If your right to vote is challenged, you have a right to request a **“Provisional”** ballot.

*****PLEDGE TO GET THREE (3) NEW VOTERS
REGISTERED*****

OUR VOTES MATTER!!!!