MOBILE, Ala – (WKRG) The family of Charles Porter, a well-respected minister, former newspaper editor and educator, confirms he lost his battle with COVID-19.

“The virus is absolutely relentless, but he fought to the bitter end,” said his daughter, Nikki Porter. She says her father spent 82 days in the hospital and several weeks on a ventilator. “He went in on April 5 and we were told he wouldn't make it through the night… but God. He was discharged June 26. Then he went to rehab for a couple of months.”

Porter died August 27. See obituary submitted by the family below.

Charles W. Porter is a native of Mobile, AL where he was a staple in his community by serving in numerous capacities. Charles Porter was a 1958 graduate of Mobile County Training School. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree from Alabama State University and a Masters of Arts from the University of Alabama. After earning a Communications Degree from Alabama State University, Charles Porter furthered his studies at The University of Alabama where he was the first Black graduate of the School of Communications. At that point, he had a strong foundation to support his dreams to pursue a career in Media. Charles Porter was ready to break barriers. He was the first Black to serve as Director of Public Relations at the prestigious Northwestern University in Chicago.

When he moved his family back to Alabama, he was the first Black to be hired at Mobile Press Register. He then went on to work for the Mobile Beacon before launching his own media outlet, Inner City News. Inner City News was established in the 70s to address issues that affected our communities, provide a positive spotlight and offer support to our inner city businesses and communities – typically overlooked by mainstream media. Inner City News eventually expanded to National Inner City.

Dr. Porter served as National President of the Mobile County Training School National Alumni Association since the 1970’s. During that time, he published The National Inner City, a newspaper which he operated for more than 25 years.

Dr. Porter also shared his gifts with the community as a powerful self-taught keyboardist. Charles co-founded a 70s Jazz Group, “Insatiables”. Over time, Charles decided to shift his audience from Jazz to Christian as he dedicated his life to the church where he ministered through music, then eventually was called to the ministry. He also received a Master of Divinity and Doctor of Humane Letters Degree from the Alabama Interdenominational Seminary.
On October 20, 2002, Dr. Porter’s title was promoted to Reverend when he delivered his first sermon. To heighten his ability to speak to mountains, Charles earned his Doctorate in Theological Studies and served as a minister at Green Grove Missionary Baptist then Friendship Missionary Baptist Church. To expand his impact, Charles oversaw the Entrepreneurial program at Bishop State Community College. This program offered highly valuable resources to new and aspiring business owners.

Before it was the ‘thing to do’, Charles Porter has always advocated for the community – notably the Black community. He wanted us to support each other’s businesses so we could build wealth in our own community. He walked the walk of Black Lives Matter before it was an official movement. Charles believed that everyone deserved to have a fair shot at life. Whenever possible, he would try to help families fill in their gaps. If someone needed guidance, he was there. If someone didn’t have an active (or positive) father in their life, he stepped in. That’s why so many non-relatives call him Uncle CW! Rev. Porter had a natural humor and wit that offered comfort and encouragement to any situation.

Charles Porter has earned a plethora of national and local accolades, recognitions and awards for his excellent work and service in the community. He received many honors for his fund-raising and community service efforts. Groups honoring him include the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, the National Assault of Illiteracy, the National Black Media Coalition, the Mobile County Board of School Commissioners, the International Entrepreneur Educators Association, the Mobile Convention and Visitors Corporation, the Mobile Islamic Center, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and the Disciples of Christ.

He was passionate about many community programs including Mobile County Training School (MCTS) and Africatown. Charles Porter is a proud member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity (Gamma Sigma Chapter).

Born from Rosie and Qullie Porter, Charles Porter was survived by his wife Joyce of 48 years. Charles Porter was also a daily blessing to:
4 children – O’Neal, Michael, Terri (Walter) and Nikki.
8 grandchildren – Kymberly, Charles, Brooke (Jarvis), Morgan (Tim Jr), Jerett, Jelica, Javarus, Markiah and the late Karimi.
4 great grandchildren – Amber, Makenzie, Jarvis Jr and Madeline
1 sister – Edna Mae Mitchell (Jodie) of Sacramento, CA
4 brothers – Willie “Snook” (Helen), James “Bae Bae” (Johnice), John “Duke” (Daisy) and Howard (Clarice) of Mobile, AL.
And a host of beloved nieces, nephews and cousins.
Evelyn Knight sat transfixed in horror by the grainy images on her black and white TV. It was March 7, 1965.

Deputized white Alabama cops, joined by thugs wielding nightsticks, charged a group of protesters at the bottom of Selma’s Edmund Pettus Bridge. The marchers were attempting to walk 50 miles to Montgomery, Alabama in protest of the killing of a young black activist by police as well as the ongoing obstruction of their right to vote.

After a warning, police and their posse charged, followed by tear-gas canisters and more police on horseback riding into the fray. Seventeen protesters were hospitalized and 50 more treated for injuries.

“I watched it on TV and I got madder and madder,” Knight said. “I was convinced I didn’t need to be in Long Beach.”

It is a story Knight has told many times over the years.

Martin Luther King Jr. would put out a call for others to join him in Selma and march to Montgomery, focusing the nation on the brutality of suppression in the South. The marches are credited with leading to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Those who know Knight would expect nothing less than for her to be in the midst of it all.

Whether as a founding member of the Long Beach Community Improvement League, as a teacher of Black Studies at Cal State Long Beach, organizing against polluters in West Long Beach or holding discussion groups in her home, Evelyn Knight has always been outspoken and involved.

Ask anyone, Evelyn Knight has always been there.

If it’s an issue she feels strongly about, she says, “I talk about it. People tell me to shut up. I don’t listen.”

But in the case of Selma, it wasn’t enough to talk the talk, you had to walk the walk; Selma to Montgomery.

**Teaching future leaders**

“She was always encouraging students to be active in the community as well as in academics,” said Willie Elston, a student and mentee of Knight’s when she taught at Cal State Long Beach in the 1960s, a time when she was among the vanguard of its Black and Ethnic studies programs.

“You had to give back to the community,” Elston said. “She was always an advocate of that.”

Elston remembers a class with Knight called Game Theory which taught students how to turn their academic understanding of issues into practical, organizational theory and how to work with varieties of people and programs.

A number of Knight’s students, namely Erroll Parker and Ahmed Saafir, would go on to be, and still are, major figures in Long Beach’s African American service community.

A native of the Africatown area of Mobile, Alabama, Knight grew up steeped in civil and equal rights advocacy.
Mobile was where the infamous Clotilda, the last known ship to smuggle slaves into the United States, delivered its last human cargo in 1860, more than 50 years after the practice had been outlawed. Knight grew up among the descendants of that ship, who founded Africatown after the Civil War.

She remembers segregated water fountains and sitting in the back of buses as well as the other subhuman treatments of Blacks that was de rigueur during the Jim Crow era.

“I was born into movements,” she said. “People were always fighting for rights down there.” And Knight carried the struggle wherever she went.

She was there helping to integrate an all-White school district in the Florissant suburb of St. Louis in the 1950s as a teacher. And yet, she was shocked when she arrived in supposedly progressive California as a supervisor for Catholic Family Services in 1962, to find “racism was really, ‘Wow! Long Beach was different from L.A. It was a smaller town and white people didn’t want us to live here.”

Knight learned that Blacks were essentially confined to the Central Area of Long Beach.

“It was horrendous, and it was non-negotiable. Blacks all stayed in their area.”

As she and other activists began pushing for reform, she remembers Whites warning about “people who bucked the system.” The warnings were borne out, she said, when neighbors used hoses to flood out the home of a Black family that moved into Bixby Knolls. But rather than shrink, Knight and others met the challenge. After all, she was born for this.

**Founding Member of Community Improvement League**

Knight was part of a group that met in the apartment of Earnest Preacely in Long Beach. In 1964, they created the Long Beach Community Improvement League, the oldest anti-poverty program in Long Beach.

Knight believes the best and most sustainable path out of poverty and inequality is education and the Community Improvement League's first program was Project Tutor, which would lead to the organization becoming home to the first Head Start Early Learning program in the western states region.

Knight's peripatetic activism would lead to stints in Baltimore and Richmond, California, where she was part of a group that worked with the social organizations, including the Black Panthers with their less publicized social programs, such as free breakfasts for children, senior escort service and busing families to visit relatives in prison.

Eventually, Knight returned to Southern California and settled in as Executive Director of People Coordinated Services in Los Angeles, which she worked until her retirement in 1997.

Of course, retirement is a relative term. Knight became a leading voice in West Long Beach with the East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice after a niece began to suffer from asthma. She still helps the Filipino Migrant Center on the Westside with social service and community organizing efforts.

“I want to teach kids to be community organizers,” she said. Knight also plays host to discussion groups at her home in Compton, her den always stocked with snacks and bottled water, since, at any moment of any day, “I have people come by when they want to talk about issues.”

Visiting Knight's home, which is on a half-acre in Compton in an area zoned for farming, is like stepping into a kind of Civil Rights time capsule. In her living room is a two-foot photograph of Knight at the first inauguration of President Barack Obama. Nearby is a copy of a Norman Rockwell painting, The Problem We All Live With, depicting six-year-old Ruby Bridges accompanied by federal agents, crossing the color line into an all-White grade school in New Orleans in 1960. Stacked in a corner are various framed certificates, proclamations and awards Knight has earned over the years.
In the den are collections of books, including several on African Americans and Civil Rights in Long Beach, in which Knight appears often.

She is now at work on her memoirs and genealogical preservation with the help of Long Beach historian and author, Sunny Nash.

“It is massive, including 20-plus hours of oral history and publications, photographic and archival preservation, photo and artifact exhibitions, published catalogs and such,” Nash said in an email.

Nash said there are plans for several showings and a possible traveling exhibit. At 86, Knight shows little sign of slowing down. She credits part of her success to remaining single.

“That’s why I’m able to do what I want to do,” she said. “I enjoy my freedom. I do what I want to do. I’m not happy doing what people tell me to do.”

**A marcher’s memories**

For all she has achieved over the years, the march from Selma to Montgomery remains a pivotal moment. After Knight was finished kicking the couch over the news about the Bloody Sunday conflict, she heard Martin Luther King Jr. send out a call for others to join him in Selma.

By Monday night, she was on a redeye bound for Texas with a connecting flight to Mobile where she intended to “borrow” her Dad’s car. On the plane, Knight met a group of ministers who were also on their way to Selma, via Birmingham where they had arrangements to be picked up by bus. Knight switched her ticket in Texas and spared Dad the surprise visit.

When Knight arrived in Selma, she said the city was filled with visitors and Black families were out on their porches offering water and places to stay.

“We all went into the Brown Chapel and King fired us up,” Knight said. “We marched to the Pettus Bridge. We were singing and we were all excited until we saw the men with billy clubs. They weren’t a welcoming committee.”

Although the police were willing to let the march pass, they would not guarantee their safety and a temporary restraining order had been placed on the march. King asked his companions to kneel and pray, then returned to Selma.

The second march was called Turnaround Tuesday. That night, a White minister and rally goer were beaten to death in Selma by a group of Whites. Three men were eventually arrested, tried and found not guilty.

After negotiations, the third march occurred on March 21. Protected by the National Guard, U.S. Marshals and the FBI, protesters staged the successful march to Montgomery, arriving on March 25.

**Postscript**

In the current political atmosphere, Knight said it is vital to stand up and be counted.

“I just want equality,” she said. “We need freedom for everyone instead of freedom for nobody, which is what is going on now.”

There is a story that Evelyn Knight tells less often that is nonetheless a fitting coda to the march to Montgomery.

According to author Charles Cobb’s, “On the Road to Freedom,” at the time of the march, Lowndes County was 81 percent Black, “but not a single Black was registered to vote.”

However, in March of 1966, Black voters got to test their newfound voting rights. And Knight was there. She said the election needed volunteers and a friend asked if she’d go.

Knight, who was living in Richmond, jumped into a yellow Chevy and, after picking up a couple of volunteers in Long Beach, drove cross-country to Selma.

On election day, the people of Selma voted in John Hewlett as the first Black Sheriff of Lowndes County.

And Evelyn Knight was right there.
Greetings, my name is Saul Smith, I am a graduate of M.C.T.S. Class of 1968. I’m writing this because Anderson told me that I was selected as 2019 M.C.T.S. Spirit Awardee. So I can understand what I’m doing, first I must ask the question, what is a Spirit award? I found it simply means achievements. This is going to be the hardest thing I’ve ever had to write about, which is myself. I will keep this brief and try not to run on and on. Personally, on the home front, there are several things I feel that I’ve accomplished. First and foremost is patience, understanding one’s self and not to be so discouraged by others. Love, without even having to explain is the most positive force on earth and I’ve mastered it because the opposite of love is hate and I won’t give into that imposter, it bears no fruit. Listening is the backbone of understanding for respect of others, their views, faiths and opinions, then learning how to analyze your own thoughts, doubts and suspicions. Most of all, be quiet and be still and you will learn. I am compassionate to others whatever their needs are. My biggest weakness and love are children. There are no limits to mature but you must have an open mind and learn how to surrender to something and try not to fight everything.

I was born on August 18, 1950 in Montrose, Alabama by a midwife, my great grandmother Willie Valerie. One of my grandfathers is Emmet Smith, not the Cowboys running back, he had a landscaping business and I worked with him during the summer. He taught me a lot about business, clients and money. My other grandfather is Russell Dick who came over on the Clotilda and during his life he amassed a great fortune in land in Daphne. As a matter of fact, city hall is sitting on what my grandmother sold them. I lived on Baybridge Cutoff Rd. with my mother and three sisters. Mrs. Freddie Mae Smith is my mother and my sisters are Bessie, Blanch, and Betty. My other sister, Arnita, started high school in Daphne where she lived with our grandparents in Montrose. The house we lived in was a shack, but it was a home. Our bathroom was an outhouse and I had to bathe in a #3 tub and we only had three rooms. Our mother provided for us all those years cleaning homes.

The Voyage: After graduation, I received a grant to Stillman under the CETA Program. While attending school, Coley Dawson and I were boycotting classes and the school because of the treatment of the students. We were asked by admin if we wanted to stay, we could not boycott. So Coley and I left. I went to New York City to begin my voyage. I lived in Harlem and worked for an accounting firm Lybrand Ross Brothers and Montgomery as an office manager. About 6 months on the job, I got a notice with my army draft number on it. I said to myself (oh sugar) and went immediately to a recruiting office, which happened to be over the Apollo Theater. I ended up enlisting to keep from getting drafted so I could have my choice of a career instead of infantry. I became a helicopter technician qualified of 4 different types of aircraft in Vietnam.

When I got back from Vietnam, I swore to never work for and owe another man, women or organization again in my life and that’s what I did. Where I was living, I became the property manager under contract. I got paid and my rent was included. I started an adult entertainment group called Search, where I rented restaurants, clubs and other facilities to give parties. I gave a party on one occasion at a restaurant called the Steak Loft in the United Nations Plaza, owned by Steve Rubell, the future owner of Studio 54. I would make my money by charging an entrance fee at the door. I would pay for these facilities by giving the owner a bar guarantee of a minimum of 5,000.00. Of course, they all made more than that. After seeing the potential for the door and the bar, I opened an after-hour club called A Change of Pace near Times Square. For 12 years we opened at 2 AM and closed at 2 PM the same day.

After 17 years in NYC I had enough of the crowds and living in a box called an apartment and it was too expensive to own a car. A garage parking space cost more than an apartment and getting on the subway crowded and having to stand wherever you went was horrible and you might have to catch a bus to get to the subway. My best friend moved to Dallas, I followed with a visit and I was so ready and impressed, I moved within 3 weeks.
I moved to Dallas in 1985, before doing so, I had procured a contract to manage the corporate home office facility of Hall Financial Group. This is one of the biggest real estate developers in the state of Texas. While working there, I spun off South Star Big Rig Reconditioning Center, which was motivated by my interest in one of the buildings vendors who cleaned the garage by pressure washing it. South Star today is the only one of its kind in the United States because of the variety and diversity of service I provide. I provided service to all the big dealerships in Dallas new, used and their Service departments.

South Star was my first incorporation. Etcetera Real Estate was my next incorporation established in 1993 to build and remodel affordable housing, most of which I got from the city. Presently, I own 42 properties all free of debt except for taxes and maintenance. Presently, I own an auto dealership, auto repair shop, paint and body, and detail shop. It is only 5 blocks from South Star Big Rig. In 2005 I built and opened a day cleaner called Executive Cleaners. I opened it for 8 years successfully before I sold it. I just lost interest, but I made a profit off the sale. My beauty salon was born out of necessity. I had stylist and barbers looking for a home and I had potential clients looking for a service center for grooming and pampering. It’s been operational for 9 years and still going strong and growing. Consortium B is my new restaurant to open in December or February. It is in the prestigious Crescent hotel and next door to the Del Frisco’s Double Eagle Steakhouse.

When a business idea is born, it is like having a child. First it is first conceived, born, nurtured, raised to produce, and serve and care for something or someone. I’m never bored, but I do have a serious sleeping disorder because I’m constantly processing, creating, developing planning, strategies on next moves. It’s not a burden but a gift to provide for my employees, vendors, customers and my family.

In closing, I want to say thanks for the challenge. But please don’t nominate me for anything else. I like incognito, low profile, seen but not heard, behind the scenes, and back up and support. Have a blessed day and be safe.

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**THE CHOIR AT MOBILE COUNTY TRAINING SCHOOL**

Written by Eugenia B. Rankins (Class of 1956)

Music at Mobile County Training School was always very important and active. There was the band, choirs, Music Theory and general music classes available to all who were interested.

This article will be centered around the vocal music area, the choir. My time at Mobile County Training School began as an 8th grader. I was excited to be in the “big” school. One day, I heard beautiful musical sounds coming from the Music Building.

The Music Building sat on a hill across the campus. It contain 4 class rooms. These rooms were where the band, choirs and music were taught.

I was interested in music and singing, so I definitely wanted to be in the choir. I eventually attain this goal. There were 2 choirs on campus (the Burleigh choir and the Fredrick Hall Concert choir) under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Ann O. Coleman. The Concert choir was open to 10th, 11th and 12th graders and was under the direction of Mr. G. Dawson Whitfield.

The choirs had a great impact on many of the school’s activities. Both choirs performed in assembly programs which we had every week. Other special programs included Founders Day, Black History Week, American Education Week, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Baccalaureate and Graduation events.

Not only did the choirs sing at school, but they went into the community and performed at local churches, music festivals, honor choir and contest. During the Christmas season, the choirs performed in Bienville Square, the American National Bank and other public venues.

As current music teachers moved on, new ones came on board. Ms. Doris M. Chatman from Texas, Ms. Delores Denham, Ms. Eugenia Burroughs (Rankins) and Ms. Doris J. Henderson continued to keep choral music alive at Mobile County Training school.
To my knowledge, the concert choir was invited to a Music Fest at Alabama A & M University and received a superior rating. Some students were selected to sing in the State Honor Chorus which was held at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.

The young people who sang in the choir at M.C. T. S. were taught music and songs of all genders: Classical, Folk, Pop and Spiritual. The student also learn confidence, respect, stage presence, poise, dress and team work which are some important life skills.

The choirs at county produced many great singers in the Mobile area. Many are still alive, well and still singing today. I believe that any former choir member of Mobile County Training School can say they received much from having been a part of the Vocal Music Program at county!

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1970-2020 Class Golden Anniversary is being moved to 2021 due to the Coronavirus pandemic. We will be working diligently with the class to ensure that the future event is well planned, celebrated and attended.

**MCTS Word Search**

R A F G L N E D R A H E U Q I N O M T U N J T
E M R S I R R A H N O T E A P P Z A I S Q H S
T Y I I F K W L S M A I L L I W Y R N E H E E
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C R A B B I T H G I N K N Y L E V E G H C U I
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S P R I N G H I L L C O L L E G E
Africatown is gaining national and international attention to its history following the May 2019 discovery of the Clotilda schooner. On board the Clotilda, Africans were kidnapped and brought to America for enslavement in Mobile, Alabama in 1860. What they did with their newly found freedom after the Civil War ended in 1865 was remarkable. From different areas, they came together and established their own community that they named Africatown. The homes, churches, and the Mobile County Training School are all a testament to the shared purpose of the founding families to establish Africatown as a residential community for themselves and future generations.

To preserve the historic purpose of Africatown, Major Joe Womack (USMC-retired) founded the CHESS Community organization. CHESS, which stands for Clean, Healthy, Educated, Safe and Sustainable, works to defend Africatown against industrial expansion while creating opportunities for the community to enjoy the benefits of nearby waterways. Under Mr. Womack’s leadership, CHESS has joined forces with the HBCU-CBO Gulf Coast Equity Consortium.

The Consortium works regionally in the five Gulf Coast states to improve the lives of children and families in Black communities harmed by pollution and vulnerable to climate change. The Consortium brings community-based organizations together with professors at six HBCUs for long-term collaborative research and action.

In the Consortium, CHESS Community partners with Dr. Elica Moss, an associate professor at Alabama A & M University. The Consortium directly provides resources to support the CHESS Community organization. CHESS Community members participate in Consortium activities to build their capacities to research and map environmental concerns, as well as take action on policy solutions.

Beginning in 2017, the Consortium and CHESS Community held an Environmental Justice forum in Africatown that was attended by more than 100 residents. At this forum, residents developed a research-to-action agenda that identifies the environmental and health conditions they would like to see changed. In a subsequent Consortium workshop, Africatown residents developed the technical skills to use the Geographic Information System. They applied this skill to create their own map of community assets and disamenities. Residents developed additional skills to conduct a community health survey in partnership with the Consortium. CHESS and Consortium partners have developed strategies for a set of policy solutions called the Africatown Safe Zone. This would provide residents protections against adverse land use and industrial encroachment in the community. Through the Consortium, CHESS receives weekly updates on COVID-19 health statistics and related air pollution data.

“We are thankful to have the professional environmental researchers and policy experts in the Consortium as allies in our fight for a healthy, safe and sustainable Africatown,” said Joe Womack, CHESS Community Executive Director.

“The future of Africatown must not be overlooked in the effort to preserve its history,” said Dr. Beverly Wright, who co-directs the Consortium with Dr. Robert Bullard. She is the Executive Director of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice based in New Orleans. Dr. Bullard is the Distinguished Professor of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy at Texas Southern University in Houston.

“In Africatown and across the Gulf Region, we see historic African American communities used as dumping grounds for toxic industrial facilities and denied the assistance they need for hurricane and disaster recovery. The severe health problems from toxic exposure, which are worsened by COVID-19, and the inequitable climate risks suffered by Black communities are all rooted in systemic environmental racism. This injustice threatens their future. We are proud to stand with Mr. Joe Womack and the CHESS Community organization to help establish a Safe Zone for Africatown’s future,” she said.
In March 2020, the Mobile County Commission, the City of Mobile, and the Alabama Historical Commission announced a partnership with the History Museum of Mobile to create an exhibition at the soon-to-be-constructed Africatown Heritage House. The exhibition will cover the story of the Clotilda (and include some of the artifacts that have been recovered from the shipwreck), with a special focus on the people of the story - their individuality, their perseverance, and the extraordinary community they established.

The role of the History Museum of Mobile is to curate, create, and eventually to operate the exhibition. From the beginning, two things have been very important to this project. First, anything we did had to be community-driven. We are so grateful to be working with an outstanding group of community leaders who have guided and advised us at every step of the way. Second, the exhibition had to be historically accurate and executed to the highest standards of public history and curatorial practice. The History Museum has a talented and highly-trained staff devoted to this mission. And to that end, we have also brought in Dr. Sylviane Diouf, author of Dreams in Africa in Alabama, as a consultant.

The exhibition itself won’t be huge – only about 2,500 square feet – but it will be a rich, multi-sensory space, dense with compelling stories and images. Woven into the larger story, visitors can expect to see and hear lots of primary source reports and stories of individuals: their histories, their families, their resilient spirit. Inside the exhibition, certain parts will have a dark and somber atmosphere, as visitors go step-by-step through the chronology of events before and after the Clotilda voyage, learning about the gravity of this history. Towards the end of the exhibition, visitors will emerge into a brightly-lit, hope-filled room that looks towards the future of Africatown and invites visitors to respond to what they have seen.

The Africatown Heritage House, which will house the exhibition, is being constructed thanks to the Mobile County Commission and the City of Mobile. It will be located adjacent to the Hope Community Center and is expected to open summer 2021. The exhibition is intended as a ‘semi-permanent’ exhibit, so that, in a few years, if there is a better place or bigger way to tell these stories, the Africatown Heritage House can then become a building for community use.

We know that this is only one part of a big, complex story that so many community partners are working together to tell. We are grateful to be able to lend a hand, and we look forward to sharing updates as the project progresses!
It’s not about the ship; It’s about the people
By: Joycelyn Davis

Growing up in Africatown
Growing up in Africatown, festivals were always a part of my life. As a child, I was taken events held at MCTS hosted by: Mrs. Arealia Phillips Craig who helped organize the first Africatown festivals; Africatown historian Henry C. Williams of the Progressive League that also sponsored the festival; Mrs. Beatrice Ellis of the Africatown direct descendants of the Clotilda Inc. who brought delegations from Benin; and major league baseball great (Miracle Mets) and native son, Cleon Jones. I would also attend the festivals at the Prichard Municipal Complex with my father under the leadership of Prichard Mayor John Smith.

My cousin Lorna Woods would hold festivals in Lewis Quarter’s honoring our ancestors who survived the journey from Africa aboard the Clotilda slave ship in 1860. We are descended from Charlie Lewis, one of the 110 Africans brought to Mobile in the Clotilda.

I attended Union Missionary Baptist Church, where the bust of Cudjo Lewis stood in front of our Church for many years. As a child, I didn't know much about the others survivors until later in my life. The bust was destroyed in 2002, and soon after that, a marquee was placed with the names of those who founded the Church. Many were the Clotilda Africans.

Books about Africatown That Influenced Me

These books put so much more information about the Africatown story was at my fingertips, to go with the stories I heard about the Clotilda and my ancestor growing up as a child.

The Clotilda Discovery, Part 1
In 2018, local reporter Ben Raines thought he had discovered the Clotilda and made an announcement in the paper that went national, actually, international. The hype behind his initial discovery was huge for Africatown. People from all over the country visited Africatown, including from the Alabama Historical Commission, from National Geographic Magazine, from SEARCH Inc., Mississippi State University, The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture with its Slave Wrecks Project, and Diving with A Purpose.

After the research showed that Ben Raines' initial find was NOT the Clotilda, I saw disappointment on many faces in the Africatown community. I too was disappointed, but I thought to myself, “It’s not about the ship, anyway; it’s about the people.” We were still here, our story had not changed.

Seminar with Mary Elliot at UMBC
Mary Elliot, who worked for the Smithsonian's African American museum held a seminar at Union Missionary Baptist Church on the importance of keeping family traditions. She asked the members of the audience what we were doing to keep those traditions alive in our families. I told the stories of how my cousin Lorna would hold festivals in Lewis Quarter's. Then Ms. Elliot asked me directly, “So, what are you doing?” It was like I could hear the record screech when she said that. From that moment on, she lit a fire in me. That was when I began to plan my first Festival.

The Festival - Spirit of Our Ancestors
I had no idea how to do a festival, but my years of watching others hold their festivals, and asking lots of questions, and asking for help, led to my first festival in February 2019. It was held at the Mobile County Training School gymnasium. It was far more than I expected. I was overwhelmed with the support from the community; it would not have been possible without the assistance of many good people. Historian, Dr. Natalie S. Robertson, was our first Keynote Speaker, especially since her book was the inspiration for my calling the event “Spirit of Our Ancestors.” Descendants shared stories of their ancestors. We had drummers, art and a fashion show, and a traditional libations ceremony. National Geographic covered the entire event.
The Clotilda Discovery, Part 2

Raines took a second try at locating the Clotilda and succeeded. After dive teams were sent out to a second wreck in the Mobile River, SEARCH and its teams confirmed that the second wreck it investigated was indeed the Clotilda. In May 2019, the Alabama Historical Commission confirmed that the slave ship, which our families talked about for generations, had been found. All I could think about was how much our ancestors suffered in the cramped spaces in that ship. Yet they survived. And thrived to create our community. Lewis Quarters is my ancestor’s legacy to his family, to us.

Second Annual Spirit of our Ancestors festival

Interest in the Second Annual Spirit of our Ancestors festival grew even more after the Clotilda had been found. So the second festival was covered by CSPAN and 60 Minutes with Anderson Cooper. Our keynote speaker was Dr. Plants, editor of Barracoon; Dr. Robertson also made a second guest appearance. The head of the Alabama Tourism Department presented us with a resolution from the Governor of Alabama and others from around the area joined in the celebration through stories and videos.

So many things have happened since before and after the findings of the Clotilda. My goal now is to continue to honor our Ancestors and the Legends of Africatown. I want to be just as successful as the Porch Creek Indians, who have consistently have had 40+ years of their Pow Wow celebrations.

And always remember: it's not about the ship; it's about the people.

The William Bill Clark Legacy Group Fund Helps Generate 8,000.00 Dollars for the MCTSAA Scholarship Fund in 2020

By: Anderson Flen

“A Servant Leader whose Legacy Just Keeps on Giving”

The William “Bill” Clark Legacy Group Fund was established in 2015 at the Community Foundation of Southeast Alabama in Mobile, Alabama to continue the works of Mr. Clark. The following organizations/programs were identified to be the Legacy Group's focus to perpetuate the William “Bill” Clark Legacy with direct support:

1. The Gulf City Golfers Association Junior Golfers Program
2. Carmel Health Networks’ Tutoring Program
3. Mobile County Training School Alumni Association Scholarship/Mentoring
4. Boys and Girls Club Mentoring Program
5. Africatown Community Garden Program
6. Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Rho Alpha Chapter Scholarship Program
7. The United States Sports Academy Sports Program

The $116.00 Campaign

May 16th is William “Bill” Clark's birth date and the fact that Mr. Clark always gave 100% in everything he supported, provided the theme for the campaign. Each year, the William “Bill” Clark Fund selects an organization to help generate funds for their program using the William “Bill” Clark's Legacy Group tools. Each year we have worked with a different group to help them and keep the William “Bill” Clark Legacy support ongoing. What a wonderful way to honor and pay tribute to a man that dedicated his life to service.

It is the hope and desire of the William “Bill” Clark Legacy Group that MCTSAA will make this an annual event that keeps on giving in honor of William “Bill” Clark. We must thank Mrs. Hattie Clark for her continual commitment with this worthwhile effort. It would not have been possible without her wisdom, kindness, support and determination.

MCTS Whippets, we must do better in 2021 because this honor’s one of our own, while helping others have a brighter future.
The United States Environmental Protection Agency has selected the City of Mobile as the recipient of a $300,000 Community-wide Brownfields Assessment Grant for the historic Africatown Community. The project with kickoff on October 1, 2020 and will end on September 30, 2023. This community wide assessment grant will provide funding to assess properties which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant preventing its reuse, redevelopment or expansion. EPA Brownfields Program empowers states, communities and other stakeholders to prevent, inventory, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse these sites.

The overall goal of the Africatown Community Project is to maintain its historical significance and to return real property to productive, environmentally conscious uses. The stigma associated with perceived environmental contamination and accompanying liability has been a major hurdle in redevelopment. The following priority sites were chosen based on their historical, religious, and community significance as well as their economic potential to benefit the residents of Africatown: Josephine Allen/Pekin Manufacturing—a 40-acre former manufacturing plant and multi-family housing complex; Clotilda’s Landing (Atlas Wrecking Company) and Lewis Landing (Truck Repair Site).

The City of Mobile Brownfields Assessment Project will serve as the first step in a comprehensive plan to redevelop and revitalize the targeted area. The presence of Brownfields in these areas directly impact the ability of the targeted area to redevelop.

During the three-year project, the following objectives will be achieved:

- Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) will be completed. Phase II ESAs will be completed on the top seven ranking sites.
- Following the Environmental Assessments, comprehensive cleanup/redevelopment plans will be developed for each of the top five sites (ABCA). Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Alternatives
- Throughout the project, the City will complete extensive community outreach and education activities which may include community meetings, outreach printed materials and community educational outreach programming.

The City of Mobile’s Brownfield project will provide the residents of Africatown with essential tools that are necessary to revitalize and preserve this community’s sacred history. Africatown has a legion of organizations fighting for Africatown’s future. The City believes that this project will result in a mutual understanding and awareness of potential for reuses of the properties. Also, the City hopes to establish a greater commitment to the redevelopment of properties rather than the development of undeveloped green fields, thus providing a better return on existing utility and transportation infrastructure investments. The efforts completed by the grant are also expected to encourage clean-up and redevelopment opportunities that reduce blight, expand the tax base, and ultimately create new employment opportunities. Overall, an expected outcome is greater appreciation and increased commitment to caring for our natural resources as well as remedying the development impacts from previous generations.

Africatown’s New Foundation Wins National Preservation Grant

The National Trust for Historic Preservation’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund recently named the Africatown Heritage Preservation Foundation (AHP Foundation) as one among 27 recipients that won more than $1.6 million in grant support.

Africatown’s new foundation, formed in 2019, will receive $50,000 from the National Trust through The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The award goes to key places and organizations that help protect and restore historic African American sites. The AHP Foundation will use the money to acquire professional help to begin building the local infrastructure needed to bring the Africatown community together, said Board President Anderson Flen.
“We are extremely excited and appreciative to be one of 27 awardees — out of 538 applications and 58 finalists — to receive funding toward our effort,” Flen said. He thanked the National Trust and its African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund for their generous support and confidence in the fledgling organization.

Brent Leggs, Executive Director of the Action Fund, says, “The recipients of this funding exemplify centuries of African American resilience, activism, and achievement, some known and some yet untold, that tell the complex story of American history in the United States.”

Over the past two years, Leggs said, the National Trust funded 65 historic African American places, investing more than $4.3 million to help preserve landscapes and buildings imbued with Black life, humanity, and cultural heritage. “With urgency and intention, the nation must value the link between architecture and racial justice and should fund these and other cultural assets to ensure their protection and preservation” he said.

Flen, an Africatown native, is an initial founder of the AHP Foundation along with Mobile County Training School classmate Retired Marine Major Joe Womack and long-time Africatown resident Ruth Ballard. Flen said they will be “calling on all willing hands, caring hearts, innovative minds, and embracing spirits to help us make the Africatown Heritage Preservation Foundation a beacon of hope and healing so that future generations will know and enjoy the internationally uplifting and transformative stories of Africatown.”

“We know the work ahead will be tremendously difficult, and will require the positive generous supporters of a strong board of directors, staff and significantly more financial resources,” he said. “Through our united efforts and collaborative work, we will build and produce the organizational foundation of excellence, our community needs, deserves, and expects.”

Ballard said that it was “humbling and exciting” for the AHP Foundation to receive such a prestigious grant on their first try. “We will do everything in our power to uphold our values and integrity, not just of the organization, but the community as a whole. The board will not make any decisions without community input.”

Womack said that, “with the grant, the real work begins.”

“Africatown has a variety of projects that have been spearheaded by individuals that are only able to devote about 5 hours a week to try and accomplish their specific mission,” Womack said. “Now we will be able to actually hire someone as a full time employee to oversee these projects and organize them in a manner that better benefits the community objectives.”

Other entities and organizations who won grants from the Trust’s $1.6 million grant cycle this year include Historic Vernon Chapel AME in Tulsa, Oklahoma; Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina; Paul Robeson House in Philadelphia; Founder’s Church of Religious Science in Los Angeles. Grants were given across four categories: capacity building, project planning, capital, and programming and interpretation.
James “Fat” Robertson
The Father of Baseball in Africatown
By: James Hope and John Flen

James Robertson was born in September 1924, to Clem and Lucille Robertson in Beatrice, Alabama. During James’ early years, his family moved to Back Street in an area called No Main Land (no man land) in Magazine Point, Alabama. Soon after arriving in Magazine, James’ father, who had a third-grade education, was able to get a job as a Railroad Laborer.

At an early age, James loved reading newspapers and especially comic books. He would lie in the floor reading for hours and his oldest daughter, Ree would lie with him and pretend to read. James attended Mobile County Training School.

After high school, James had odd jobs, but the one that he liked most was as a cook on a boat that would stay out to sea for two weeks at a time on average. It was on this boat that James developed his cooking skills for which he became well known. James especially liked cooking on holidays and if the occasion was not a holiday, he would make it one. James like being outside in the open air and loved to BBQ, which was his specialty. For those fortunate enough to experience James’ BBQ slow cooked over a number 2 tub with chicken wire were treated to a taste that was uniquely James.

Brookley Air Force Base hired James later in his working career and provided more stable employment. In 1969, Brookley Air Force Base was closed as a result of military downsizing around the country. James had the opportunity to relocate to another military installation, but he chose not to and retired, partly due to the challenges with his weight.

Before retiring, James had a set routine after working that all of the local kids knew. His first stop was going to be the baseball field at Mobile County Training School where he would drop off a green army duffle bag filled with balls, bats and other equipment. He would then go home. This interim period was when local younger kids who were interested in baseball had a chance to practice before older players on James’ team got off work and began practice. By this time, James would have returned from home. The kids would then watch the “big’ team practice and would sometimes participate by shagging flies or retrieving foul balls.

As if James was not already spending enough time owning and managing the Plateau Bears, almost all of his time after retirement would now be spent on his team. So much so, his wife Mildred said, half the time when James was not home, she didn't know where he was. She only knew that he was somewhere with a station wagon full of kids with him. This was what he loved. This was his life.

One of the things that caused James to stand out was his love for the game of baseball and his willingness to do whatever he could to share his passion with others. He was committed to helping each player become the best ball player he could become. He was a coach, a mentor and a friend and was always encouraging and made you feel comfortable regardless of how many strike outs you had or errors you made. Every player who played for James felt special and thought they were his favorite player. James treated every body special.

James always provided transportation to and from games, often out of town, in one of his used, famous station wagons. He always made sure players had the equipment they needed and players were sure to be fed after the game, which all the players looked forward to. How was James able to own and manage a team when there was no money in it? He never complained, always had a smile on his face and always looked forward to the next game.

Even though James was mild-mannered and even-tempered, he could be tough if he needed to and you always knew who was in charge. One of the things that characterized James was his commitment to ensure his players conducted themselves as gentlemen...
and respected others and he demanded the same respect for his players. James’ wife and daughter, Ree, in separate interviews, both pointed that they were not aware of any occasion when there was a disturbance of any kind. James did not tolerate player misbehavior. For this reason, James had the full trust of parents whose children were sometimes under-age. Parents knew James would get their children to games and return them home safely.

James not only had a following of local kids, but also had a following of his own, seven of them. All of his children loved baseball and his five boys were always with him. Four of the boys were baseball players in their own right and went on to play for the Plateau Bears. Their father didn’t have the pleasure of seeing them play as he had passed away. The boys were managed by Bill Kidd who played for their father and was an outstanding player and long time faithful Plateau Bear.

The Legacy of James Fat Robertson is not only about the life he lived, the sacrifices he made and the contributions he rendered. But his legacy is also about the lives of the young men he touched. If it were not for James, there would have been those who would not have learned skills that would propel them to be strong, productive men. They would not have had role models and developed friendships to last a life time. They would not have had the opportunity to build confidence and self-worth to help them weather the storms of life and to help them achieve goals they would not have otherwise achieved. They would not have had the opportunity to build upon their God given talent to make their high school teams.

Some would have not have received scholarship or played college ball. They would not have attracted pro scouts to sign a minor league contracts or go on to the Baseball Major League and participate in World Series Champions games. The James Fat Robertson Legacy belongs to all of us. Let’s cherish it and grow it.

Johnny Davis, Jr. Portrays Sammy Davis, Jr.
MCTS Graduate Makes It Big Time

“Reflections of the Rat Pack” remembers when entertainers Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis, Jr., made Las Vegas history with their never-ending parties, the beautiful women and creating lounge acts that changed the face of a notorious town, making these singers into legends. The Flamingo Laughlin and B & D Productions brings back a sense of that time through this show that stars Duke Hazlett as 01’ Blue Eyes, Dave Michaels as Dean Martin and Johnny Davis, Jr. as Sammy with Dave Michaels as Dino and Duke Hazlett as Sinatra in the Flamingo Laughlin’s musical revue “Reflections of the Rat Pack”

Johnny Davis Jr., as Sammy Davis, Jr. Here is a closer look at Sammy, aka, Johnny Davis Jr....

Unlike a lot of tribute artists, Johnny Davis, Jr. did not grow up listening to Sammy Davis Jr., nor did he change his name once he took on the persona for this particular “rat pack” show. “Most of the impersonators I’ve come across grew up admiring their characters and spent years and years to get into them and learn about the person, I was never a Sammy fan,” explains Davis, matter of factly. “He was as far from anything I listened to a youngster as I could get. I liked Marvin Gaye, Smokey Robinson and even Elvis, but Sammy wasn’t in my neighborhood.” Not surprising, as Davis’ “neighborhood” was the military. “I was in the Air Force and started out as an Administrative Specialist...but I always wanted to entertain,” he explains. “They opened up a career field in the Air Force...I could be a vocalist and still be in the military. It was perfect for me.”
It was perfect for Davis for 27 years. That’s how long he was in the military, both as a Postmaster and part time entertainer. And through out his career, there was one mantra he kept hearing: “Hey, you look like Sammy Davis, Jr.” “That’s why I decided that once I retired, I would move to Vegas and try and see what happens,” explains Davis. “I started doing ‘mix and mingles,’ building my reputation until I hooked up with the Rat Pack.

“So, I read biographies about Sammy, the real guy. The more I read, the more impressed I became...the things he went through as a Black entertainer in the ’60s, I don’t know if I could have done that. I admired him, so the act that I perform is more of a tribute to him. I understand and appreciate what he did for so many Black entertainers. He opened a lot of doors, he paved the way.” In the current “Reflections of the Rat Pack” show at the Flamingo, Davis is enjoying the benefits of Sammy’s work. He is an integral part of what the show is all about. Camaraderie. And the mesh between the current artists is as genuine as the actual relationship between Sinatra, Davis and Martin.

“A couple of things impressed me about the show,” explains Davis. “A lot of guys who do ’Rat Pack’ shows play it by ear and do off the cuff stuff...there’s no set pattern to their show. It’s not organized. This show has structure, we know where we’re going with it and we try not to use the jargon they used in the old shows. We’ve updated it...we’re using their same style, but it’s been updated, modernized. “I also like that I’m also working with people who’ve been doing this for many years. Duke Hazlett, who does Frank Sinatra, actually knew Sammy. He and I talk about his experiences in the’60s with Sammy and the Mills Brothers. This has been very educational for me.

“What I have in common with Sammy is that during his time with Frank and Dino, he was considered the kid, he was the youngest and he was a small guy. I feel the same way...I’m new and young in experience and age as a performer. I haven’t been doing this near as long (as Hazlett and Michaels) and they are my mentors...they’ve been there, done that. They know show business. “And the relationship with Duke is on the same level as Frank’s with Sammy. Off stage, we still hang out and talk. It’s so much fun and we enjoy each other as friends. It’s something I really cherish.” Davis said the one question he constantly has to answer is about his name. “That is my real name, given at birth,” he said. “I didn’t change my name for the show, we’re not related. It’s my name and I’m proud of it.”
Africatown’s Religious Community

First Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church

122ND Church Anniversary

A church standing strong even in challenging times.
Isaiah 40:29

OCTOBER 11, 2020
10:00 AM

Facebook Live Stream will be available

Payment:
Paypal.me/FHMBC

664 Shelby St. Magazine Point, AL 36610
Rev. Lamar D. Brady – Pastor

Social distancing guidelines must be followed to enter sanctuary.
Welcome to Yorktown Missionary Baptist Church. We exhibit and encourage the change we wish to see in others. We believe and follow the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and have a personal relationship with Him. Yorktown Missionary Baptist Church is committed to integrity, perseverance, transparency, and resilience in pursuit of its God given mission.

Statement of Purpose: Yorktown Missionary Baptist Church purpose for ministry is to encounter God through worship, encourage believers through fellowship, enlighten His people through relevant and age appropriate teaching, engage believers through service, endeavor to save the lost through evangelism, and enrich the community through kingdom development.

Yorktown History
The spirit of God conceived the church in the hearts, soul and minds of Christian men and women who prayed from house to house. Over the years, written records have been lost and destroyed by fire. The history of the church was recorded orally from generation to generation. March 21, 1883, a group of Christian leaders from the Plateau community organized a Baptist Church known, at that time, as Three Mile Creek Baptist Church, under the leadership of Reverend Frank Peterson. Years later, the church name was changed to New Hope Baptist Church, then later to Yorktown Baptist Church.

Yorktown Missionary Baptist Church has had the ties that bind with Mobile County Training School. The church and school did so much for this community. In 1915, fire destroyed the school building. Yorktown Baptist Church came to the rescue of the Mobile County Training School and provided a place for students to continue their education. Due to another fire in 1939, Yorktown Missionary Baptist Church offered Mobile County Training School the opportunity to use the facilities for grades five, six and seven. The students of Mobile County Training School were required to attend Sunday school each Sunday. On Monday, the punch card verified their presence in Sunday school. The sanctuary was used for academic studies, declamatory contests, oratorical contests and Baccalaureate services.

Yorktown Pastor
Minister Christopher L. Williams is a born again Child of The Most High God. His physical birth was in Brownsboro, Alabama in the year 1962. In 1993, he was called by God to preach the Gospel, Licensed on July 4, 1993, then on June 9, 1996 he was Ordained. Currently he serves as the Pastor of Yorktown Missionary Baptist Church located in the Historic Pleatau Community of Africatown, Alabama. Pastor Williams has been happily married over 30 years to the love of his life, the former Ms. Theresa D. Eaton and they are the proud parents of two children, Abreeotta Jumaira and Christopher Lee II and two grandchildren, Hailey and Carter.

Yorktown provides live online church services that you may view on Facebook at www.facebook.com/yorktownbaptist.church.

To donate to Yorktown Missionary Baptist Church, please visit us at: www.yorktownmissionarybaptistchurch.org

Yorktown Missionary Baptist Church
851 East Street
Mobile, AL 36610
Phone: (251) 452-8108

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Union Missionary Baptist Church

150th Church Anniversary

1870 2020

Theme:

“Rooted In The Word, By Faith We Grow”

Colossians 2:7 KJV Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the Faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

3 p.m.
February 9, 2020

506 Africatown Boulevard | Plateau, Alabama 36610
Reverend Derek L. Tucker, Pastor
We Have Come this Far By Faith...
Let us Remember our Africatown Churches

The Importance of the Africatown Churches are Just as Important as ever. The Africatown Churches have stood as institutions built on community, family, justice, and freedom.

The Black church can be defined as the body, entity, or institution formed in hush harbors of plantations - secret gathering places for the enslaved to engage in their religious and spiritual practices – which over generations emerged into valuable and pivotal places of community, protest, and worship.

Let No Hero Be Forgotten

The Plateau Cemetery is a place of Historical Significance to the local community, State, Nation and World. It brings residents and visitors closer to an understanding of the past and help to provide insights into how people within the area used to live. By looking at headstones and reading details about those that have passed, we can gain information on the importance of individuals to the community at the time and the jobs and social connections they had during their life.

To show respect for our deceased loves ones let’s help keep the grounds looking great:

Please Make Donations:
You may send your tax-deductible donations to:
Old Plateau Cemetery
P.O. Box 10611
Prichard, Alabama 36610

Contact persons are:
Mr. Trent Walker- 251- 666-7567
Ms. Reetta Allen- 251-457-7097
or
Dr. Washington Taylor- 251-490-7567

Africatown Heritage Preservation Foundation
P.O. Box 66478
Mobile Alabama 36660
On Wednesday, September 2, the Slave Wrecks Project (SWP) hosted a virtual community town hall to discuss their tentative plans regarding the $500,000 federal allocation to the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The allocation is intended to support activities related to supporting excavation, education, and community engagement around the Clotilda discovery. With that said, these funds will not be used to support the documentation or preservation of the Clotilda wreck. Other entities will handle those activities.

During the call, Mary Elliott recounted the work that SWP has done in Africatown, including assisting with the initial search for the wreck, scuba diving training, and various meetings to understand Africatown community needs and concerns. Initial plans for a “community read” of Barracoon by Zora Neale Hurston were postponed due to COVID but intended for future implementation.

Moving forward, SWP intends to continue and expand the Scuba Diving training certification with youth in Africatown under the leadership of Kamau Sadiki. SWP hopes to train interested youth to the level of proficiency needed to participate in Diving With a Purpose’s annual Maritime Archaeology Survey course in Key Largo, Florida, so they can get practical experience mapping shipwrecks. This program will help local youth explore careers in the marine sciences and potentially contribute to the search, identification, and interpretation of future wreck sites similar to the Clotilda.

In the realm of education, SWP plans to partner with local school educators to develop a curriculum that brings the history of the Clotilda and the heritage of Africatown into the classroom. Led by Dr. Alexandra Jones, founder and CEO of Archaeology in the Community, her more than a decade of experience teaching archaeology in K-12 classrooms - nationally and internationally - will be brought to bear in Africatown. Youth engagement remains central in the activities of SWP.

Finally, SWP intends to conduct archaeological research within the wider Africatown community. Under the leadership of Dr. Justin Dunnavant, SWP intends to assist with the analysis and documentation of existing artifacts related to Africatown to make that knowledge and history more readily available to the community. New excavations will be led by community interest but tentatively include the Cudjoe Lewis house site and Peter Lee’s chimney site as two potential areas of exploration. Additionally, there is a possibility of surveying – though not excavating – the Old Plateau Cemetery to assess the state of preservation and offer recommendations for mitigation.

The global pandemic has hindered plans to liaise with community members and begin these projects, but SWP is slowly making strides. The Slave Wrecks Project looks forward to working with the Africatown community moving forward. You can view the recording of the townhall at: https://video.ibm.com/recorded/127751437

Additionally, you can submit comments and questions to swp.africatown@gmail.com

You can also read AL’s coverage of the virtual townhall here: https://www.al.com/news/mobile/2020/09/clotilda-africatown-efforts-poised-to-move-forward.html
It’s Time to Swim!
By: Gordon Matthewson (Instructional Assistant)

It is time to swim! For 9 months, we develop in our mother’s wombs, surrounded by water. Then, to be born in America, faced with Jim Crow Laws, denied access to state recreational facilities and local swimming pools, it is time to Swim!

I am very excited about your Scuba Diving and Swimming programs. Children love to play in water and this is the best time to start instructing them on how to swim. Children have little fear when it comes to playing.

Being able to swim will open the door to more family recreation. Parents can introduce their children to learning how to swim. Children will feel safe in the water because they have swimming skills. Parents that have never had the opportunity to learn how to swim can do so and enjoy the pleasure and relaxation of swimming.

I anxiously wait to learn more about the history of the slaves that were brought to Mobile, Alabama on the slave ship, the Clotilda. It should be mandatory to teach the history of the slaves brought to America on the Clotilda in all public schools and state universities in America.

Finally, you have a treasure in your history that many African American have not experienced. Your ancestors may have left you with some stories from the motherland, Africa, such as, African names, a song, words in their native language and many other things.

Thank you Mobile County Training School Alumni Association for allowing me to submit an article in your newsletter. I deeply appreciate this honor.

Three Mile Creek Sites at Lewis Landing 1 & 2 and the Kossola Park Won a Student Honors Award from the Mississippi Chapter of the American Association of Landscape Architects (ASLA)

After 20 years as principal of BlackDog Renderings Inc, an architectural rendering and visualization company in Houston, Texas, in 2016, Powney returned to Mississippi State University to pursue a Master’s Degree in Landscape Architecture. He has applied his background in architectural design and experience in architectural rendering to a wide variety of research and design projects while studying in Starkville, MS.

Powney initially became involved with the working with the Africatown community while working on designs for the Africatown Blueway Connection sites as a graduate. Led by Professors Bob Brzuszek and Dr. Chou Li, the MSU students spent time with Africatown community members and visiting sites along Three Mile Creek, Hogs bayou, and the Community Center and school in April 2018. Powney was subsequently a team leader for students working on the series of sites along Three Mile Creek and was the designer for the Place of Baptisms park on Chun Street.

After this project, he co-taught a freshman class at the Mississippi State School of Architecture and in the Spring 2020, the class worked with the Emmett Till Foundation in Sumner, Mississippi to explore and develop designs for a memorial. This memorial would stand at the river where the body of 15-year-old Emmett Till was recovered in 1954. These experiences expanded on his interactions with the community to undertake this latest project at the Lewis Landing and Kossola Park sites.
As an experienced and Federal Aviation Authority Part 107 Licensed Unmanned Aerial Vehicle pilot, Powney has also learned to incorporate aerial site photography as an integral part of his design process and communication style. Born in Bristol, England, Powney gained both his undergraduate degree and postgraduate in Architecture at Plymouth University and has worked for architectural practices in Bristol, London, and New Orleans. Notable Powney was the lead designer for the 10,000 seat Jefferson Baseball Park, home of the AAA New Orleans Zephyrs, while working for the architectural firm Perez Ernst Farnet. With his Fall lecturer position in the MSU Department of Landscape Architecture, Powney hopes to continue assisting the Africatown community as well as others across the South.
10. Kossola Park - Canoe landing and boardwalk trail at Three Mile Creek

4. The pavilion at Lewis Landing 1

Legend
1. A lift diameter and lift wide walkway pier give visitors access to a unique view of one of the few natural sections of Three Mile Creek without the need for a watercraft.
2. Paddlers may tie up and disembark at the pier.
3. The riverside boardwalk connects the park upstream to the sites at Lewis Landing 1 and 2 and in a future trail expansion to Telegraph Road.
Matthew Fox

Firstly, I would like to give thanks to the Mobile County Training School Alumni Association Scholarship Fund for the scholarship. My grandfather is Lemuel Taylor Jr. and I am grateful to have benefited from his alma mater and be a part of his legacy. I have grown up in Mobile, AL my whole life, and I attended Council Traditional School, Phillips Preparatory School, and W.P. Davidson High School. Since 6th grade, I knew that I wanted to become an engineer and my parents supported me through everything.

It is an exciting time for me because I just graduated from Auburn University on August 8, 2020. After 5 years, I earned a Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering Degree. During my time at Auburn, I worked with ESPN as an audio engineer for sporting events on campus. I also, interned with G.E. Aviation, The Boeing Company, and Blue Origin, and served as an ambassador for the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering. After graduation, I accepted an offer with the Boeing Company and will be working as a Structural Engineer in Boeing’s Defense, Security, and Space Division located in St. Louis, MO. I am very interested in working in the Aerospace industry specifically in Additive Manufacturing. Again, thank you MCTSAA for the scholarship. It has helped me achieve my goals!

Jamya Pinkney

I would like to thank the members of Mobile County Training School Alumni Association for choosing me as one of the recipients of this esteem scholarships. My name is Jamya Pinkney, and I’m an adopted only child. I was originally from Grove Hill, Alabama but I moved to Monticello, AR when I was about 3 year old. For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to be a doctor. This has been and is still my current dream.

When I was about 9 years old, my birth mom was killed in a car accident and that experience forced me to look at life from a different perspective. I realized at that moment how short life can be, and I knew that I didn’t want anyone else to have to experience the pain of losing someone they loved. After suffering from that pain, I knew there was something I wanted to do to help others. I discovered my true passion when I read the book Gifted hands. It was then that I decided I wanted to be a neurosurgeon, one of the most challenging and daunting specializations a doctor can choose.

This year, I completed my freshman year of college at Hendrix College, a small liberal arts school in Conway, AR. I am currently a pre-med Biochemistry and Molecular Biology major. My professional goal after graduation from college is to attend medical school and then a residency in neurosurgery. This past year, I joined the Medical Doctors to Be Club and Students for Black Culture. In the fall, I will be a part of the 2020 Orientation Leaders to assist incoming freshman.

My personal interests has always been centered around music. I was a member of the marching band throughout middle school and on into concert band in high school where I played the flute. I started private piano and guitar lessons in middle school and continued taking lessons up until I graduated from high school. I have done multiple guitar and piano recital and completed numerous times with my high school band. Along with music, I also enjoy sewing and reading.

I had originally planned to go to college this summer to get certified in phlebotomy.

Due to the sudden outbreak of Covid-19, my original plans for this summer were canceled. However, I was still able to get a job at my local hospital as a facility greeter. I still plan on becoming certified in phlebotomy to gain more experience working in a clinical setting before going off to Medical school. I will also be looking for a job shadowing opportunities to further build my knowledge of my preferred profession.
Paeton Harris

I have grown up being an African American male. Yes, my journey is not even half as treacherous as my older family members and past ancestors. But no, my life still is not easy because of my brown skin complexion. Being from the Harris and Pate family lineage, countless success tools and unmeasurable support was and still is given to me. Consequently, as the famous quote says, “To whom much is given, much will always be required.”

Growing up, I was always interested in obtaining knowledge. I quickly realized that intelligence would be my greatest offense and defense in today’s harsh society. One of my greatest influencers actually happened to be my older brother Phillip. His dreams were limitless, his leadership was effortless, and his worth was priceless. With the support of my family and the strength of God in my life, I knew that I would always remain unstoppable.

Upon graduation from W. P. Davidson High School in 2018, I matriculated to the illustrious Tuskegee University for my undergraduate tenure. My major is Agricultural Business with a concentration in Management and Marketing. This past academic year, I served as Office Manager of the Ambassador Program, Assistant Bass section leader and Mister Choir of the Tuskegee University Golden Voices Concert Choir, Senator of the Agribusiness Club, and also a residential assistant. For my upcoming junior year, I will serve as President of the University Student Recruiters Program, Mister Epsilon Theta of the Epsilon Theta Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Incorporated, a second-year Residential Assistant, and a member of the Safe Space Club. I have also proudly maintained a 4.0 Cumulative GPA while being heavily involved in Tuskegee’s rich culture.

My professional dream is to work in the business sector of a Fortune 500 Company. This dream came true in September of 2019 when I graciously accepted a three-year contract with The Boeing Company. After an intensive application and interview process last summer, I became an esteemed member of the Boeing | Thurgood Marshall College Fund Scholar Program for Cohort 2. Since then, I have worked as a Strategy Analyst in the Renton, Washington region for Boeing’s Commercial Airlines. My long-term professional goals include continuing with The Boeing Company and obtaining my Master’s Degree in Business Administration.

Outside of my academic and professional lifestyle, I have sung with the United States All-National Chorus for two years which included two virtual compositions. I am also an Eagle Scout as of 2015 and I am currently a member of the National Eagle Scout Association. Words cannot express the thanks I continually give to scholarship committees like the MCTS Alumni Association for believing in me and aiding me financially. With all of my past, present, and future success, my skin color has still remained the same. I am still a product of the Harris/Pate family lineage. But most importantly, I am still an unstoppable African American man blazing towards his true destiny.
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The Plateau School Voice
Published Monthly

PLATEAU, ALA.

Feb. 12, 1912

Mr. Booker T. Washington,
Tuskegee Institute, Alabama,
Dear Mr. Washington,

As the Board of Trustees, Faculty, and Citizens of Plateau Public School and Citizens of Mobile and County do hereby extend our an invitation to deliver the commencement address of the Plateau School on Friday night, May 31st at 8:00 P.M., we beg your acceptance and wish to know the expenses and etc. The people of this section of the State are most anxious to hear your since I have not been successful as yet in arranging your schedule through the State. I feel that your coming will be a great asset to the Educational work in Mobile County.

Very truly yours,

Isaiah J. W. Whitley

P. O. Box 88

Plateau Public School
Eduates Head, Heart, and Hand

Busy Women's Club
Mrs. Annie O'Neal, Chairman
Mrs. Zetta Giles, Secretary
Mrs. Clara Miller, Treasurer
The 1921 Graduating Class of Mobile Country Training School. Standing, left to right: Alex Reid, Georgia Waymon Rogers, Evelyn McCall, Hattie Keeby, and S.L. Bradley. Seated, left to right: Flora Houze, Iona Adams, Professor Isaac J. Whiley, Flora Brown and Agnew Finley. This was the first group of black students to complete high school training in Alabama.
Ray Olivet Richardson
Environmental Manager for the City of Mobile

Ray Olivet Richardson is an environmental and safety professional with 27 years of experience in governmental, industrial manufacturing, consulting, and construction settings. Notable is her involvement and passion in the Brownfields Program where she has successfully been awarded three Brownfields Assessment Grants for the City of Mobile. Ray has a strong commitment in Brownfields redevelopment and is an advocate for environmental justice and sustainability in underserved marginalized communities. Ms. Richardson is the Vice President of the Board of Directors of Groundwork Mobile County, and is involved on numerous outreach and nonprofit community initiatives.

Ms Richardson, is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated, Links Incorporated and Prince of Peace Catholic Church.

Rebecca Atkinson, MPH
PhD Candidate LSU HSC School of Public Health

Originally from Mississippi, Rebecca moved to New Orleans in 2011 to work in project management and improvement engineering. After spending 2 years in the private sector, Rebecca left her position in engineering to pursue a career in Public Health. In 2014, she began working as the Gender-Based Violence Program Coordinator at Women With A Vision, a New Orleans grassroots organization focused on improving the lives of women and children. In 2015, Rebecca began working at the Institute for Public Health and Justice while pursuing a PhD in Public Health at Louisiana State University then transitioned into work in City government where she served as a Chief of Staff under Mayor LaToya Cantrell's administration. Rebecca joined the Center for Employment Opportunities (a nonprofit providing employment services to individuals returning from incarceration) in November, and in her role as Regional Director, she provides operational and programmatic support to CEO's offices in Louisiana, North Carolina, and Tennessee. She holds a B. S. in Chemical Engineering from Mississippi State University, an MPH from Tulane University, and is pursuing a PhD in Public Health at Louisiana State University.

Leavie D. King, III, M.S., B.A., C.P.S., C.S.P.

Leavie D. King, III, M.S. is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of COACHEDUP, a professional development company established in 2014 and located in Mobile Alabama. He previously held the position of Project Manager with Gulf Hauling and provided executive leadership and training with FedEx throughout the southeast region. He also has held several positions, such as Compass Bank-Branch Banking Officer, Consumer Money Management-District Manager, All Janitorial-Managing Director and Astute Financial-Development Area Training Director.

Having served the Mobile community on boards of numerous local organizations and has held several leadership positions with local groups, he served as District Chairman-Boy Scouts of America Mobile Chapter, Board Member -Center for Fair Housing, Board Member -Feeding the Gulf Coast, Former President -Downtown Toastmasters and Former President -UFFC.
Currently, Leavie is the Chairman of the Board for the Mobile Area Black Chamber of Commerce and sits on the Development Council of Victory Health Partners. He also has established philanthropic mentoring projects and is designated as a Partner in Education with both Ella Grant Elementary and Maryvale Elementary Schools and is the founder of the COACHEDUP Boys 2 Men Conference. Leavie is a proud member of Chickasaw Church of Christ, United States Marine and a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

He holds several certifications; Certified Speaker and Orator, Certified Trainer, Association for Training and Development – Gold Certified, and has won over 25 oratorical competitions nationwide. Mr. King holds a Master's degree in Science Management and a Bachelor in Business Administration. He is married to Tammy a teacher with the Mobile County Public School System. They have two children.

Elizabeth Ashley Hope

Elizabeth Ashley Hope is a native of Atlanta, Georgia and the daughter of late MCTS graduate, Class of 1967, Paul and Elizabeth Allen Hope; and the eldest of three sisters. In 2002, she was accepted into The Ohio State University on an academic scholarship. She graduated from Ohio State with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology in 2006. As a first generation college student, Elizabeth understood the value of higher education so she began her career in Program Planning and Administration.

Currently, she is a Program Coordinator in the Division of Health Services Management and Policy at Ohio State University. In this role, she coordinates and administers all operational activities for faculty, staff and students. In May 2020, she finished her Masters in Workforce Development and Education with a specialization of Human Resource Development as a 2-time Ohio State University graduate. Ms. Hope has held high-level roles in organizations and groups focused on leadership and professional development of students, women, and people of color. As a strong advocate for diversity and inclusion in the university setting and workplace, she continues to use her voice and passion for community to drive forward those goals.

Organization Honorees