Uncommitted: On January 4th the 2010 Census was kicked off at Des Moines City Hall. While the stakes are huge it became painfully obvious the Kansas City Region has no real interest in accurately counting Iowa’s African American population. The consequences of another historic undercount will be devastating to Iowa’s African American community and very, very costly to our state and numerous communities throughout Iowa.
WASHINGTON (AP) - One year after the election of President Barack Obama, black optimism about the United States has surged, while Hispanics have become more skeptical about race relations, according to a Pew Research Center poll released Tuesday.

Thirty-nine percent of blacks say African-Americans are better off now than five years ago, according to the poll. In 2007, just 20 percent of blacks felt that way.

Fifty-three percent of African-Americans say the future will be better for blacks, and 10 percent say it will be worse. Three years ago, 44 percent of blacks said the future would be better, and 21 percent said it would be worse.

Obama’s election is the obvious explanation for this optimism, especially considering the recent recession, said Andrew Kohut, president of the Pew Research Center.

“The poll shows a whole list of ways in which black attitudes are more positive than they were prior to President Obama’s election,” Kohut said. “When you have a big event like that, and all of the indicators are pointing in one direction, I think the conclusion is inescapable.”

Even though the median black household income has declined relative to whites since 2000, 56 percent of blacks and 65 percent of whites say the difference in standard of living between the two races has narrowed, the poll found.

“Blacks are saying the income gap has narrowed, when in fact that is not the case,” Kohut said. “It has something to do with the perception and the sense of things as more positive.”

A majority of both blacks and whites say the core values of each group have grown more alike in the past decade.

Still, 81 percent of blacks say more changes are needed to ensure equality, compared with 36 percent of whites and 47 percent of Hispanics. The groups also continue to have divergent opinions on how much discrimination exists.

The poll found that Hispanics, not blacks, now are seen as the ethnic group facing the most discrimination. Twenty-three percent of all respondents say Hispanics are discriminated against “a lot,” compared with 18 percent for blacks, 10 percent for whites and 8 percent for Asians.

Hispanics also are less optimistic than other groups about inter racial relations. When whites and blacks were asked how well their group gets along with Hispanics, more than 70 percent say “very” or “pretty” well. In contrast, only about 50 percent of Hispanics feel the same way.

There have been a number of recent attacks on Latinos that advocates say are hate crimes fueled by anti-immigration rhetoric.

“My sense is that racism in this country seems to be pretty entrenched,” said Carmen Febo-San Miguel, executive director of the Latino cultural center Yalter Puertorriqueno in Philadelphia. She cited the beheading death of a Mexican immigrant in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania, that federal authorities have called a hate crime.

“We’ve all witnessed some of the efforts to combat racism, but at the same time, we still see this incredible violence, for the sole reason of being from a different race, being perpetrated against Latinos,” she said. “You wonder how deep these roots are buried and how difficult it is going to be to eradicate it.”

Hispanics are much more likely to believe there is significant discrimination if they were born in the United States. Forty-eight percent of foreign-born Hispanics say there is “a lot” or “some” discrimination against their group; 79 percent of Hispanics born in America felt that way.

The poll also delved into how Americans perceive Obama. A stratospheric 95 percent of blacks still view Obama favorably, while 56 percent of whites view him favorably, down from 76 percent just before the inauguration.

This could be connected to blacks’ and whites’ different views about the economy, and the idea that blacks were hit hard by the recession but had much less to lose.

The percentage of whites who rate the economy as excellent or good has fallen from 42 percent to 7 percent since late 2006, by the recession but had much less to lose.

The poll of 2,884 people, including 812 blacks and 376 Hispanics, was conducted by landline and cellular telephone from Oct. 28 to Nov. 30, 2009. The margin of sampling error was plus or minus 3 percentage points for the entire group, 3.5 percentage points for whites, 4.5 percentage points for blacks and 7.5 percentage points for Hispanics.
Legislative Update For The Community

By State Representative Ako Abdul-Samad

The 2010 Legislative session opened on Monday and things have gotten off to a quick start. After hearing from the Governor and Chief Justice, the House will be approving a package of education bills before we go home this first week to help strengthen our K-12 schools and protect property tax payers.

Top priorities for legislators this year includes helping middle class families, balancing the state budget without raising taxes and creating good-paying jobs across Iowa.

The bills I have introduced this first week are: Iowa Opportunities Workforce Act, Nuisance for Multiple Arrests, Small Business Training Assistance pilot project, Foreign Language School Curriculum requirement. Cell Phone Use While Driving and Dental Assistant Duties. I will in the following weeks get into details on each bill.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, JR. stated, “An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.”

Senate Democrats Launch New Internet Resources For Iowans To Increase Engagement

Iowa Senate Democrats have launched several new Internet resources for Iowans — including a new website at http://www.senate.iowa.gov/democrats — to increase accountability and public engagement during the upcoming legislative session.

“We believe state government should always listen and engage with Iowans,” said Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal. “In today’s tough economic times, that give and take is more important than ever. New social networking tools will help Iowans stay informed about the legislative process and make it easier for them to give us feedback.”

The web site uses the free, open-source content management system WordPress and was developed at no cost to taxpayers.

“This web site has already attracted more than 300 comments on key issues and helped us organize a conference call on first responder communications that attracted more than 100 participants,” Gronstal said. “Our Internet efforts will continue to grow and expand during the upcoming legislative session. Our goal is to provide a valuable information source for all Iowans, including active citizens and local news media.”

The new site’s features include a blog updated by Senate staff with timely articles on legislation written by real people, in understandable “plain language” everyone can understand.

· Join the conversation: Are you tired of political jargon and legalese? Each week during the session we’ll post explanations of active legislation written by real people, in understandable “plain language” everyone can understand.

· Blog: Stay in the know with timely articles on legislation, current events, grant opportunities, and new state resources.

· Connect: Now you can connect with the Senate Democrats on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Picasa, and subscribe to our RSS feed.

· Plain Language Initiative: Are you tired of political jargon and legalese? Each week during the session we’ll post explanations of active legislation written by real people, in understandable “plain language” everyone can understand.

· Stay up to date on the go: Visit the website from your mobile phone and you’ll automatically be redirected to a page formatted for your device.

Latham Statement On December Unemployment Numbers

National Jobless Rate Remains At 10 Percent; 85,000 Jobs Lost!

Iowa Congressman Tom Latham issued the following statement on Monday in response to the latest national unemployment report, which showed that the U.S. jobless rate remained at 10 percent in December while the economy lost an additional 85,000 jobs:

“Americans are hurting, and the December unemployment report shows that, despite the promises of Democrats in Congress, the Obama stimulus bill and the growing list of enormous spending and tax measures have failed to jumpstart the economy and create jobs but have succeeded in putting our children and grandchildren further and further into debt.”

“In recent months, communities throughout Iowa have suffered plant closings and job losses that have devastated local economies and squeezed the budgets of families. Iowans have been waiting for over a year for Washington to enact common-sense policies that will lead to a real long-term recovery. The Democrat leadership in Congress has responded with taxes, a massive increase in the size of government and a record national deficit.”

“It’s time we turned to fiscal discipline to put us on the path to job creation and economic prosperity. We need an approach that includes comprehensive tax relief for families and job-creating small businesses. These latest unemployment numbers are proof that the big spending of recent months has failed to bring back jobs.”

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State Senator Matt McCoy

Let’s make sure our tax system is accountable, cost-effective

As vice-chair of the Senate Ways & Means Committee, I believe we must ensure that our system of business tax credits is accountable and cost-effective. This session legislators will take a hard look at new recommendations designed to reform our system of business tax credits. On January 8, the Tax Credit Review Panel issued recommendations to ensure tax fairness, competitiveness, simplicity and accountability for all Iowa corporate tax credits.

Senator Matt McCoy is chair of the Transportation & Infrastructure Budget Subcommittee and vice-chair of the Ways & Means and Appropriations committees. He also serves on the Commerce, Local Government, and Transportation committees.

State Government Reorganization legislation filed

Historic legislation was introduced during the first week of the 2010 session to reorganize Iowa’s state government for the first time in almost 25 years.

The proposed legislation, SSB 3030, includes e-government innovations, purchasing consolidation and the merger of several state agencies. According to nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau and other sources, these reforms will save significant dollars immediately and much more in the long run. Change isn’t easy, but I believe we are on track to pass legislation that will provide better services to Iowans, cut government bureaucracy and save taxpayer dollars.

Change isn’t easy, but I believe we are on track to pass legislation that will provide better services to Iowans, cut government bureaucracy and save taxpayer dollars.

There is a growing consensus that now is the right time to make bold changes. This summer, for example, the bipartisan State Government Reorganization Commission unanimously agreed on a detailed set of recommendations. In addition, many of Governor Culver’s suggestions are also part of this legislation.

For an overview of the State Government Reorganization Commission’s proposals, go to www.legis.state.ia.us/sdps/docs/hand/2010/HFTCMR1.PDF. You can review the Governor’s recommendations at www.governor.iaoia.gov. Just click on “Iowa Efficiency Review Report.”

Senator Matt McCoy
Chair, Transportation & Infrastructure Budget Subcommittee
Vice-Chair, Ways & Means and Appropriations Committees

State Senator Dick Dearden

Jobs and fiscal responsibility are top priorities for 2010 session

As soon as the 2010 session got under way this week, Republican and Democratic legislators got right down to work on balancing the next state budget. We are focusing on protecting the priorities of Iowans and investing in moving Iowa quickly through these tough economic times.

Despite the lingering national recession, I believe Iowa can emerge with a stronger, growing economy that creates good-paying jobs. All of us—the Governor, legislators, Democrats and Republicans—agree that’s the most important thing we can do for Iowa right now.

We’ll achieve that goal by:

• Balancing the state budget without raising taxes. We won’t add to the burdens of middle-class families by raising taxes during a recession.

• Focusing state job-creation efforts to help small businesses and ensuring we get good results. We’ll also continue investing in key industries that have proven successful for Iowa, including renewable energy and other innovative technologies that have transformed our state into a major manufacturer of finished products from the crops we grow.

• Continuing to put Iowans to work making much-needed community improvements and rebuilding from the natural disasters of 2008.

• Ensuring our workers have the skills and education to compete in the global economy. Every Iowa child should get a quality education, and experienced workers must be able to upgrade their skills to keep up with today’s rapid changes.

• Focusing state job-creation efforts to help small businesses and ensuring we get good results. We’ll also continue investing in key industries that have proven successful for Iowa, including renewable energy and other innovative technologies that have transformed our state into a major manufacturer of finished products from the crops we grow.

• Ensuring our workers have the skills and education to compete in the global economy. Every Iowa child should get a quality education, and experienced workers must be able to upgrade their skills to keep up with today’s rapid changes.

We’re also taking steps to make every dollar count for taxpayers by consolidating agencies, delivering services more efficiently, eliminating wasteful spending and creating more accountability.

This session, we’ll act on the recommendations of Iowans that were unanimously approved by the bipartisan State Government Reorganization Commission.

We’ll also conduct a thorough review of corporate tax credits. Those that aren’t creating jobs or accomplishing their goals will be fixed or eliminated.

Today, far too many working-class and middle-class Iowans are wondering if they have a future in our state. The answer is “Yes, they do!”

Additional information

This is a legislative column by Senator Dick Dearden, representing the east side of Des Moines and Pleasant Hill. Photos and further information are at www.legis.state.ia.us/sdps/docs/hand/2010/HFTCMR1.PDF. You can review the Governor’s recommendations at www.governor.iaoia.gov. Just click on “Iowa Efficiency Review Report.”

To contact Senator Dearden during the week, call the Senate Switchboard at 515-281-3371. On weekends he can be reached at home at 515-262-1203. E-mail him at dick.dearden@legis.state.ia.us. Senator Dick Dearden is chair of the Natural Resources Committee. He also serves on the Appropriations, Ethics, Labor & Business Relations, Rules & Administration, and State Government committees.
Elpis Fellowship — Weekly Meditation

“Bitterness”

Verse of Meditation: Ephesians 4:31 (NKJV)

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.”

Emotions are strong complex feelings. Be it feelings of joy, sadness or anger, we all deal with them on a daily basis. Sometimes we let our emotions get the best of us. These emotions, if not kept under control, can lead us to a place of “bitterness”, and this is not a good place to be in. It can cause us to do and say things that will end up regretting, apologizing and repenting for later. Bitterness, if unresolved can and will produce sin. And even though we may find ourselves in sin, according to Colossians 1:20 “God will restore us back to Himself”; but there is something we have to do in order to get back to a place of right standing with Him.

The Amplified Bible says in Ephesians 4:31–32 “Let all bitterness and indignation and wrath (passion, rage, bad temper) and resentment (anger, animosity) and quarreling (brawling, clamor, contention) and slander (evil-speaking, abusive or blasphemous language) be banished from you, with all malice (spite, ill will, or baseness of any kind). And become useful and helpful and kind to one another, tenderhearted (compassionate, understanding, loving-hearted), forgiving one another (readily and freely), as God in Christ forgave you.” Simply put, get rid of the bitterness! Once the bitterness is gone and we have genuinely repented, we can continue to move closer to God. This barrier is no longer blocking or hindering us from a closer relationship with Him.

Even though we may find ourselves in a place of bitterness, which may have led us away from the Father, He will forgive us! His forgiveness is extended to us even though we have fallen short of His glory. It is God’s way of giving us another chance to get it right even though we are undeserving. He does it because He loves us.

New Normal: Apply God’s word “put off” bitterness and “put on” kindness, be tenderhearted and forgiving to one another…just as Christ has forgiven you!

Michelle Harris

“Growing Together In The Things Of God”

A Little Bit of This and A Little Bit of That

Review of 2009

On January 1, 2010, I woke up and lay in the bed thinking about the 2009 review that Channel 13 TV played the night before. They mentioned the worst of 2009 as the photo of Jonathon Narcisse appeared on the screen talking about the failure of the 2009 review that Channel 13 TV played the night before.

I am still not sure just what the meaning for “worst” was.

Next, they showed Serena Williams, the number one rated tennis player in the world, at the time. They didn’t show her at her best but showed her in a moment of anger with a ball and racket in her hand fussing at the tennis judge. That moment cost her $92,000 and, possibly, The U.S. Open Championship.

I’ve never seen them call line fouls on anyone else in tennis except the Williams sisters. They did this to both of them in key matches.

Now let’s go to the worst of the year 2009, you guessed it…Tiger Woods! They can’t show enough negatives or talk about him enough.

Tiger is the greatest golfer of our time. Tiger’s dad worked hard to make his son the greatest he could be. His dad paid the cost not anyone else. Tiger Woods is the greatest golfer because he worked hard to be it. Nobody gave him anything. But Tiger entered into a game a “white men only” game and became number one.

He didn’t serve fried chicken and collard greens at the Master’s dinner as one golfer suggested he would after dominating that championship. He didn’t destroy the game of golf, he elevated it, but now the media is truly trying to destroy him. What he did should have been left to resolve between him and his wife. He’s not the first man to cheat on his wife and he won’t be the last. What the media has done to him makes it almost impossible for a wife to work through even if she wanted to. It’s too embarrassing all the trash that has come from under the woodwork.

Now they want to say Tiger has cost people billions of dollars. Why billions? They don’t own him.

He has plenty of money if he never plays again but golf needs him!

---Nelle---

Family life is too intimate to be preserved by the spirit of justice. It can be sustained by a spirit of love which goes beyond justice.

--- Reinhold Niebuhr

Before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched across the pages of history the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence, we were here. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. - - Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Michelle Obama: No Need For First-year Do-overs

WASHINGTON (AP) - Michelle Obama reflected on her first year in the White House and calmly claimed no need for any do-overs: Even the things that didn’t go quite right were part of the learning curve, the first lady said, and that includes the state dinner penetrated by three party-crashers.

“The evening was so wonderful and it was so well-orchestrated that for me, the other stuff that everybody is talking about is a footnote to what the state dinner actually was,” she said. “So I wouldn’t do that over.”

Overall, Mrs. Obama said, “the things that have worked and the things that haven’t worked are all a part of making this experience what it is and getting us all ready for this coming year.”

The first lady looked back at the past year during an hourlong conversation with a handful of reporters in the Old Family Dining Room, seated under portraits of two of her predecessors, Frances Cleveland and Edith Roosevelt. With her new bobbed haircut, the first lady arrived wearing a favorite russet-red dress and over-the-knee Jimmy Choo suede boots that she confessed allow her to avoid wearing stockings.

She ticked off a list of achievements for 2009: holding 200-plus White House events, visiting 14 states and eight countries, establishing a garden, creating a mentoring program and more. But she declined to give herself a grade for the year, saying “really, how do you do that? And then what happens after you do it?”

The first lady called 2009 “a good year of listening and learning” and laying the foundation for issues she’ll push in 2010 - principally a campaign against childhood obesity.

While Mrs. Obama in the past has used the bully pulpit to promote issues such as healthy eating, national service and mentoring, she will take on a larger role as the point person for an administration-wide fight against childhood obesity, including pushing for changes to the school lunch program. She’ll make her pitch to the nation’s mayors during a gathering in Washington next week.

Her hope is to ultimately produce measurable changes in obesity rates among youth.

“I want to leave something behind that we can say that because of this time that this person spent here, this thing has changed,” she said. “And my hope is that that’s going to be the area of childhood obesity.”

Mrs. Obama said that establishing a vegetable garden on the South Lawn this past year proved to be a surprisingly potent way to start a “non-threatening” conversation about eating right and fighting obesity. It’s key, she said, to talk about the issue “in a way that doesn’t make already overstressed, anxious parents feel even more guilty.”

While the conversation with the first lady ranged over a variety of issues, Mrs. Obama declined to share her thoughts on Republican Sarah Palin, saying she didn’t know her well enough. And she said no decision had been made about whether she’ll be involved in campaigning for candidates in the 2010 midterm elections.

Mrs. Obama said she began last year with overwhelming worries about her daughters, Sasha and Malia, focusing on how the girls and her own mother would adjust to the move to Washington. In March, when the girls declared they felt at home in Washington, “that was the first time that I really was able to breathe a sigh of relief,” Mrs. Obama said. Asked about her major accomplishments for the year, the first lady started with this: “My kids are sane. I recognize them as the kids that they were before we got here.”

Mrs. Obama said 2009 was also about “figuring out the job” of first lady. She said it’s been surprising to have every move, word and wardrobe choice subjected to celebrity levels of scrutiny.

“How you stay grounded is to not focus on it,” Mrs. Obama said, adding that she checks in with friends from her past to make sure it’s not all going to her head.

Asked about the state dinner had been handled, the first lady said the White House and Secret Service were taking steps to make sure such a breach never happens again. Pressed specifically about how the event had been handled by her longtime friend, Social Secretary Desiree Rogers, the first lady added: “When I say the White House, I mean everyone in the White House.”

On another matter, Mrs. Obama said Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid had no need to apologize to her for his remarks about President Barack Obama’s race and dialect.

“I know Harry Reid,” she said, “and I measure people more so on what they do rather than the things that they say.”

Reid apologized last weekend after a new book revealed that during the 2008 presidential campaign, he had described Obama as a light-skinned African-American “with no Negro dialect, unless he wanted to have one.”
1883 Memoir Of Black Life
In R.I. Is Project’s Focus

PROVIDENCE, R.I. - William J. Brown led a typical life for a free black man in 1800s Providence. He was a shoemaker and a preacher, and through his church became a leader of the city’s African-American community before dying at age 71 in 1886. He likely would have been forgotten by history if he hadn’t written a memoir, “The Life of William J. Brown of Providence, R.I.” published three years before his death. The book chronicles Brown’s family history, including how his grandfather was brought to Rhode Island on a slave ship owned by the Brown family, for whom Brown University is named; the freeing of his father by abolitionist Moses Brown; and his own history if he hadn’t written a memoir, “The Life of William J. Brown of Providence, R.I.” Brown’s story will reach the classroom because, many scholars believe, it was the slights of those who found interracial marriage unacceptable. They were a huge and vital part of the community, closely connected and intertwined with the lives of those families,” she said.

Even after William J. Brown’s father was freed, he worked for Moses Brown and their families maintained close ties. While he has kind words for Moses Brown, who opposed slavery and is an admired figure in the state’s history, William J. Brown also tells of Moses Brown going back on a promise to give land to his father, only giving him some of what he promised. These kind of details shed light on our understanding of the state’s complicated history. Rickman said.

“He’s Moses pushing for freedom,” he said. “But then he’s willing to use his status and clout to take back half the gift.”

In his book, Brown, whose mother was a Narragansett Indian, describes telling fellow patients at a Boston hospital how the races mixed in the city.

“I told them the rich white people of Providence associate with all respectable colored people; and we associate with them, because from them comes our support,” he later wrote. “With the poorer class of white people, and treat them well,” he wrote.

But he also speaks of anger and bitterness directed at the black community by whites, and the lack of protection by the law - unless a member of the white community intervened.

Brown, who went to school until he was 20, tells of a time when he and a friend were walking to night school and got into a fight with some white men. Another white man intervened and demanded the two be hauled off to jail, until the owner of a nearby apothecary shop stepped in to vouch for them.

Brown describes places that no longer exist, such as Addison Hollow, also known as Hardscrabble, where whites attacked African-American residents in 1824, and an area where men would line the street looking for fights, called Scamps Corner. But it also describes existing neighborhoods and buildings on the city’s East Side in such detail that readers can picture him walking down the street.

Rickman plans to use those descriptions to design two walking tours, one for the public and one aimed at teachers, whom he is especially targeting in hopes that students will learn about Brown’s life and reach the classroom and become part of the state’s history curriculum.

Return Of The Campaign Book: ‘Game Change’ A Hit

NEW YORK (AP) - The campaign book is back on top.

“Game Change,” a sensational account of the 2008 presidential race co-authored by John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, was No. 1 on Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble’s Web site on Monday, a day before its official release.

Publisher HarperCollins has already increased the print run twice, from 75,000 to 135,000, then to 155,000.

Election books once were a publishing standard, starting with Theodore White’s “The Making of the President, 1960” and continuing in the 1970s with such classics as Timothy Crouse’s “The Boys On The Bus.”

But by the 1980s, as campaigns grew longer, and the media larger and faster, interest in the genre faded. Elections now are so compulsively covered that even books about the deadlocked 2000 race, which wasn’t resolved until weeks after the public voted, failed to catch on.

Election books “are not for the majority of readers,” said Sallie Leventhal, a buyer for Barnes & Noble, Inc. “Presidential campaigns are two-plus years in the making … and average readers aren’t all that interested in the inside details behind campaign strategy.”

But “Game Change” has been in the headlines thanks to such details as Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada describing then-Sen. Barack Obama as a “light-skinned African-American” with no Negro dialect, unless he wanted to have one.

Blagojevich: ‘Blacker’ than Obama comment ‘stupid’

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) - Rod Blagojevich apologized Monday for saying he’s “blacker than Barack Obama,” but the disgraced former Illinois governor said he probably “got a little bit off” while talking about the president.

“One of those deals, he said, was the possibility of naming Attorney General Lisa Madigan to Obama’s Senate seat in exchange for cooperation on important deals.

He also continues to accuse prosecutors of persecuting him for routine political deals.

The twice-elected Democrat was impeached and removed from office last year after federal prosecutors arrested him on corruption charges that included trying to sell Obama’s old U.S. Senate seat. He has pleaded not guilty.

Ahead of his trial, which is expected to start in June, Blagojevich is appearing on NBC’s “Celebrity Apprentice.”

He also continues to accuse prosecutors of persecuting him for routine political deals.

One of those deals, he said, was the possibility of naming Attorney General Lisa Madigan to Obama’s Senate seat in exchange for cooperation on important programs from her powerful father. Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan.

He used an innamously coarse word to refer to the attorney general.

“If I can get this, how much do I love the people of Illinois to make that sacrifice?” Blagojevich said in the interview.

But on Monday, Blagojevich said, “I don’t think I said that.”

Mother Who Inspired Book ‘The Color Of Water’ Dies

EWING, New Jersey (AP) - Ruth McBride Jordan, whose life story was celebrated by her son in a best-selling book, “The Color of Water,” has died.

She was 88 and had been in failing health.

James McBride said his mother died Saturday at her home in Ewing, New Jersey.

His 1996 book, subtitled “A Black Man’s Tribute to His White Mother,” catapulted his mother to international fame.

Born in Poland, Ruth grew up in Virginia and moved to New York. She married a black pastor, the Rev. Andrew McBride, and after his death, another black man, Hunter Jordan.

They had 12 children. James wrote that his mother never paid attention to the slights of those who found interracial marriage unacceptable.
Mary J. Blige To Headline 2010 Essence Fest

NEW ORLEANS (AP) - R&B singer Mary J. Blige will headline this year’s Essence Music Festival in New Orleans, a festival official said.

Billed as one of the nation’s largest annual events celebrating black music and culture, the festival is slated for July 2-4.

The full lineup has not been released, but as in the past, musical acts will perform at the Louisiana Superdome and motivational seminars will be held during the day at the Morial Convention Center.

Blige has performed at Essence eight times, the last being in 2008.

This year, the Grammy winner is expected to perform songs from her latest studio album, “Stronger with Each Tear.”

“Mary J. has reached an arc in her career where her work is so important, and people are passionate about her music,” said Michelle Ebanks, president of Essence Communications Inc., which owns the festival. “Having her at Essence is all about excitement and energy and celebration.”

Essence began in 1995 to celebrate the 25th birthday of Essence magazine. Last year’s festival drew a record 428,000 attendees, Ebanks said.

This year, the festival plans to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Essence magazine, as well as the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, Ebanks said.

The rest of the lineup will be announced in about a month, Ebanks said.

The rest of the lineup will be announced in about a month, Ebanks said.

Besides headliners like Blige, the festival showcases New Orleans acts. In the past, those acts have included New Orleans’ queen of soul Irma Thomas, Troy “Trombone Shorty” Andrews, trumpeter Irvin Mayfield and the brass band of the festival.

Ebanks said seminars and anniversary events are still in the planning stages and will be announced closer to the time of the festival.

Mary J. Blige will headline this year’s Essence Music Festival in New Orleans. She has performed at Essence eight times, the last being in 2008. This year, the festival plans to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Essence magazine, as well as the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. The rest of the lineup will be announced in about a month, Ebanks said.

Federal Judge: FDNY hiring is discriminatory

NEW YORK (AP) - A federal judge has slammed New York City for adopting hiring practices at the fire department that he says were designed to keep blacks from joining the force.

In a ruling, Judge Nicholas Garaufis said the FDNY’s written exams were part of a pattern of intentional discrimination against blacks in violation of the Civil Rights Act.

The judge ruled in July that the written exams used to screen and rank applicants were discriminatory. The department has about 350 black firefighters out of 11,500.

The city law department disagreed with the judge’s ruling. A spokesman for the organization that represents black firefighters says he’s hopeful a remedy is near.

Pioneering black sportscaster Art Rust Jr. dies

NEW YORK (AP) - Pioneering African-American sportscaster and author Art Rust Jr. has died at age 82.

His daughter, Suzanne Rust, said he died Tuesday in New York after a long struggle with Parkinson’s disease.

Rust got his start at New York radio station WWRL and worked at NBC from 1967-73. In the 1980s he hosted a popular sports talk radio show on WABC.

His daughter said Rust considered himself a sports historian more than anything. Baseball and boxing were his favorites, and his books included autobiographies written with Joe Louis and Darryl Strawberry, along with an oral history of black baseball players that explored their struggles against racism.

Colo. seeing more swine flu in Latinos, blacks

DENVER (AP) - Colorado health officials say they are seeing higher rates of swine flu among blacks and Latinos this flu season.

Chief medical officer Ned Calonge at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment says diabetes and asthma increase a person’s risk of complications from swine flu, and Colorado has high asthma and diabetes rates, especially among Latinos and blacks.

The health department is urging anyone with asthma or diabetes to get vaccinated.

Iowa Bystander Mission

The responsibility of the Black press is to empower the Black community through meaningful communication and leadership nurturing, and to keep the Black community informed of those issues most vital to us as a people.

Iowa Bystander

President, CEO & Publisher • Jerald Brantley, Sr.
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EEO/AA
Facelift Planned For Memphis Civil Rights Museum

MEMPHIS, Tennessee (AP) - The sign on the public bus from Montgomery, Alabama, invites you to take a seat near the statue of Rosa Parks. No sooner do you sit on the hard, bench-like seat than a voice barks out orders in a distinctly Southern accent, intensifying with each new stop.

"Please move to the back of the bus."

"I need that seat now. Please move back."

"If you can sit there in other buses, suppose you get off and in one of them!"

"If you don't move out of that seat, I'll have you arrested."

Then the narrator chimes in, saying: "In 1955 if you had not moved by this point, you would be arrested." That is what happened to Parks, the black civil rights pioneer who protested segregation by refusing to give her seat to a white man.

The bus, with its plater statuses of Parks and a white bus driver, is among the most popular exhibits at the National Civil Rights Museum, located at the Lorraine Motel. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated there April 4, 1968, when he traveled to Memphis to support striking city sanitation workers.

It is easy to understand the popularity of the bus: it is one of the few interactive exhibits at the museum, which opened in September 1991 and will undergo renovation during the next three or so years at an estimated $10 million to $15 million cost.

Museum leaders "are fond of saying, when we opened, we were using state-of-the-art laser discs," says Tracy Lauritzen Wright, the museum's director of administration/special projects.

Another somewhat interactive exhibit involves a small room off to the side with two telephones in it. Visitors can hear a conversation between President John F. Kennedy and Mississippi Gov. Ross Barnett about James Meredith, the black student who attended the University of Mississippi in 1962. Kennedy's frustration grows and grows as Barnett says he will send 280 highway patrol officers to protect Meredith, but they will not be armed.

"Well, what can they do to maintain law and order and prevent the gathering of a mob and, uh, action taken by the mob? What can they do?" Kennedy asks.

Barnett: "Well, they'll do their best to. They'll do everything in their power to stop it."

Many of the museum's exhibits rely heavily on time lines, newspaper clippings and other reading material. Renovations are barely in the planning stages, but Wright says the museum intends to add technological elements to appeal to younger generations raised on video games and computers. On the other hand, the institution does not want to lose older visitors or overshadow its mission as alhistory, not a science, museum.

"We want to make it easier for people coming through to understand what are the key message points within each exhibition," Wright says. "Now, that might be a little tricky with all the text information presented. What is the key message of a particular exhibit, and how does that tie into the exhibit as a whole? Sometimes we want to do is help our visitors understand the lessons of the movement and find their applications in their life today."

One possibility would be to allow visitors to search for what happened in their communities during a particular time or action, such as the sit-ins. Most Americans are familiar with the most famous of the early sit-ins, the ones in Greensboro, North Carolina, but not necessarily those in Nashville, Tennessee. "They would be able to identify more personally what was going on in their own community," Wright said.

Or they might redesign the lunch counter that symbolizes the sit-in movement so that visitors can sit on the stools as they read about the movement and watch video of the sit-ins. Right now, the 1960s-era stools are deemed too fragile for sitting, especially in a museum that attracted 230,000 visitors in the fiscal year that ended in June 2009.

The renovation will not change the museum's size, 25,600 square feet (2,380 square meters) of exhibit space in two buildings, nor will it change such important features as the preservation of room 306. That was King's motel room just off the balcony, where a slightly colored piece of concrete symbolizes the blood he shed from a sniper's bullet. Nor will other iconic elements change, including the replica of a Freedom Riders bus, which carried groups of civil rights activists to the South, and the re-creation of the Pettus bridge, where protesters marching for voting rights in Selma, Alabama, were beaten by state and local lawmen.

"We were one of the first museums of this kind, dealing with this kind of history as a permanent exhibition," Wright said. "The objective was to really chronicle the key episodes of the traditionally understood civil rights movement of the '50s and '60s."

The renovation will not make the museum unrecognizable from that original mission, she said. "We are putting on a new face and a little bit of new interpretation," she said. Those include updates, such as the sit-ins. Most Americans are familiar with the most famous of the early sit-ins, the ones in Greensboro, North Carolina, but not necessarily those in Nashville, Tennessee. "They would be able to identify more personally what was going on in their own community," Wright said.

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Soul Singer Teddy Pendergrass Dies

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - Teddy Pendergrass, who became a sex symbol in the 1970s and ’80s with his forceful, masculine voice and passionate love ballads and later became an inspirational figure after suffering a devastating car accident that left him paralyzed, died Wednesday at age 59.

The singer’s son, Teddy Pendergrass II, said his father died at a hospital in suburban Philadelphia. The singer underwent colon cancer surgery eight months ago and had “a difficult recovery,” his son said.

“To all his fans who loved his music, thank you,” his son said. “He will live on through his music.”

Pendergrass, the first black male singer to record five consecutive multi-platinum albums, suffered a spinal cord injury and was paralyzed from the waist down in the 1982 car accident. He spent six months in a hospital but returned to recording the next year with the album “Love Language.”

He briefly returned to the stage at the Live Aid concert in 1985, performing from his wheelchair. He finally performed in his own concerts to recording the next year with the album “Love T.K.O.”

Pendergrass quit the group in 1975 and embarked on a solo career in 1976. It was his solo hits that brought him his greatest fame. With songs such as “Love T.K.O.,” “Close the Door” and “I Don’t Love You Anymore,” he came to define a new era of black male singers with his powerful, aggressive vocals that spoke to virility, not vulnerability.

His lyrics were never coarse, as those of later male R&B stars would be, but they had a sensual nature that bordered on erotic without being explicit.

“Turn Off the Lights” was a tune that perhaps best represented the many moods of Pendergrass — tender and coaxing yet strong as the song reached its climax.

Pendergrass made women swoon with each note, and his concerts were a testament to that affection.

Pendergrass is survived by his son, two daughters, his wife, his mother and nine grandchildren.

Study: 1 In 4 Female Teens Involved In Violence

WASHINGTON (AP) - About one in four U.S. female teens is involved in some sort of violent behavior at school or at work, according to a government report.

A survey of more than 33,000 girls and women aged 12 to 17 found that 26.7 percent had been involved in a serious fight at school or work, a group-against-group fight or had attacked someone with the intent to harm the person in the previous year, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reported Thursday.

“In the public mind, acts of teenage violence are most commonly associated with boys,” the report observed, but “it is clear that the problem is pervasive among girls as well.”

Males do have a higher rate of violence, the report added, with 33.6 percent engaged in one of the types of acts in the year before the study.

Still, SAMHSA Administrator Pamela S. Hyde called the report alarming. “We need to do a better job teaching girls at risk and teaching them how to resolve problems without resorting to violence,” she said.

The new survey was done between 2006 and 2008 and the results are similar to those in a SAMHSA study from 2002-2004.

The new analysis found that 18.6 percent of females aged 12 to 17 were involved in a serious fight at school or work, 14.1 percent took part in a group-against-group fight and 5.7 percent attacked others with the intent to do serious harm. Some engaged in more than one type of violent behavior.

Rates of violent behavior were higher for who engaged in binge drinking or used marijuana. Also, rates were higher among families with low income and for adolescents who were not attending school.

For those in school, violence was more common among those with poorer grades.

Violence rates were highest for blacks, 38.0 percent, and lowest for Asians, 17.3 percent. Among other groups: mixed race, 30.2 percent; Hispanic, 29.0 percent; American Indian or Alaska native, 26.8 percent; and white, 23.7 percent.

The data was collected as part of SAMHSA’s National Survey on Drug Use and Health.
I had an in-depth conversation with a person recently. The object was to try and get a notion of what the average white person thought about the plight of black people in America. I realize that the thoughts and opinions of just one person will not necessarily give an average of the general public. In this instance though, I believe I’m hearing what most white Americans think of us.

First of all, she thinks the only thing a black man needs to do is get up off his butt and go out of the house and get himself a job. After getting this job, he can take care of his children, pay his bills, and become a good taxpaying citizen.

Oh God I wish it were that simple, just go apply for and get a good paying job. Let’s take a look at what is necessary in order for a job to qualify as a good job. First, we need to receive a living wage; seven bucks an hour will not cut it. Where is an uneducated, unskilled black man going to get a job that pays even that much?

The lower the pay, the less likely any necessary benefit package. Try to get a feel for the frustration in wanting to provide for you and yours, and not being able to find gainful employment. Believe it or not, most black guys that are looking for work, really do want to work. I don’t claim to be an expert on social issues, but I do have a reasonable amount of education and my eyes and ears are in good working order.

The more I look at this problem, the more confused I become, what I mean by this is that it is pointless to put a person in a position where he or she cannot perform the tasks of that position. The day of pick, shovel, and strong back, are all but gone, a man needs to know something in order to succeed today.

What troubles me is the fact that there are a lot of men that are virtually un-employable due to lack of skills and training, and an inability to grasp these new concepts. There is a segment of our society referred to as, “the hard core unemployed.” The largest segment within this group is black males, probably between the ages of 35 to 65 years of age, having been put out of work by automation and down-sizing.

Some of these people had worked jobs for 35 years or so, and started right out of high school if they got that much education. I’ll bet most folks don’t know that back in the fifties and sixties, the high schools in Des Moines, worked to get as many black males thrown out of school as possible if they didn’t participate in sports. Those who didn’t drop out, were thrown out, and they took whatever labor jobs they could find, myself included.

Now they are confronted with the fact that they don’t have any other skills and their future is looking dim. I know a lot about this situation because I worked a job for twenty-five years, and when I injured my back, they fired me. I really didn’t know what to do but as a disabled worker, I was able to go to college and get a degree. This won’t work for dislocated workers unless they can pay their own way. There is another obstacle, you must be able to pass certain entrance exams, and they are kind of involved.

I met a number of guys that were in a situation similar to mine at that time, and I suggested to them that they try going back to school. Their reply went something like this, “man I can’t go back to school now, I’m about to lose everything I worked all my life for, I need some money right now, today.”

Most of these guys are bright and willing to work, just no real skills. The value of education was never a priority in their lives. Our fathers were not well educated, so they didn’t insist that we be well educated, it just wasn’t that important then, at least not to us.

The part of this that is so sad, is the fact that the system didn’t want us to have an education. The feeling was that educated black men would be a danger to what they held near and dear. We can’t wait any longer for others to see after our needs we must come up with ways to help ourselves and our brothers and sisters.

Together we can make a difference, it’s not going to be easy, but I can’t ever remember anyone telling me that life was going to be easy. R. L. Parkey, Sr.
Black Golf Pioneer Bill Powell Dies

CANTON, Ohio (AP) - Bill Powell, the first African American to build, own and operate a golf course, died earlier this month. He was 93.

The PGA of America said Powell died at Aultman Hospital in Canton following complications from a stroke.

"Bill Powell will forever be one of golf’s most unforgettable American heroes," PGA of America president Jim Remy said. "Bill made us appreciate the game and each other that much more by his gentle, yet firm example."

"He was born with a fire within his heart to build on his dream. In the process, he made golf a beacon for people of all color. The PGA of America is better today because of individuals like Bill Powell. We will miss him dearly. We extend our thoughts and prayers to his family as we remember a wonderful man."

In August, Powell received the PGA Distinguished Service Award, the association’s highest annual honor. In November, he was inducted into the Northern Ohio PGA Hall of Fame and honored as the Person of the Year by the Ohio Golf Course Owners Association.

The Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce also recently presented the Powell family with its Community Salute Award.

"My father made a mark," said daughter Renee Powell, the second black player to compete on the LPGA Tour. "And, I believe that God wanted people to know the mark that he made on this nation."

The grandson of Alabama slaves, Powell created Clearview Golf Club after returning home following World War II. While serving in Europe, he earned the rank of Technical Sergeant in the U.S. Eighth Air Force Truck Battalion.

Powell worked 18-hour days to support his family and build Clearview. Denied a GI Loan, he found funding from two African American physicians, and his brother took out a second mortgage on his home.

Clearview opened its initial nine holes in 1948. Powell eventually repaid his benefactors to gain full ownership, and nine more holes were completed in 1978.

Clearview is on the National Register of Historic Places, and nicknamed "America’s Course." Powell said in his 2000 autobiography, "Clearview: America’s Course." "It was a labor of love. Golf is a part of society and I wanted to be included. I want you to be included, too. I’ve always felt that each individual should leave something behind of meaning. It feels good to know that I have done that with Clearview, at long last."

In 1992, the Powells were honored by the National Golf Foundation as the Jack Nicklaus Golf Family of the Year. That year, Powell was awarded the "Cornerstone of Freedom Award" from the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission.

Powell was inducted into the National Black Golf Hall of Fame in 1996, and became a PGA Life Member in 1999. Powell also received honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees from his alma mater, Wilberforce University, and from Baldwin-Wallace College.

Powell also played a role in The First Tee, which has distributed more than 1,100 William J. Powell Scholarships that allow youngsters to attend The First Tee Life Skills and Leadership Academies conducted on college campuses.

Powell was preceded in death by wife Marcella and son William. In addition to daughter Renee, he’s survived by son Larry, who has served for more than 30 years as superintendent at Clearview Golf Club, and twin sisters Mary Alice Walker and Rose Marie Mathews.