

SOUL OF THE EMPIRE

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BETTY WRIGHT

Legacy Lessons in Black Music

By Myshjua Allen Murray for WSS News,
Arts, Entertainment & Culture

What Juneteenth, Mother Wit, and BWL Entertainment's New Tapedeck Partnership Teach Us About Freedom in the Music Business

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BottomLine

Publisher's Commentary by Wallace J Allen IV

Juneteenth is Freedom's 'Unfinished Song'

On June 19, 1865, two and half years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, General Gordon Granger of the Union Army landed in Galveston, Texas to inform the

enslaved men and women of Texas, that they were no longer enslaved and in principle, free!

Though being enslaved naturally made freedom a goal, freedom did not

come with an instruction book, or more importantly, forty acres and a mule, which were the main survival tools of the day; however, the fact that freedom did come with

ready-made 'haters' didn't change the fact that at least the title of the unfinished song was established, and shouted from the swamps to the rooftops... JUNETEENTH!

Freedom did not have to be fully delivered or even described to be smelled and felt... It was/is as sweet and tangible as an apple!

See "Botto..." page 6

Rialto Juneteenth Jam 2026 Returns to Ferguson Park Celebrating Culture, Community, and Freedom

Rialto, CA — The City of Rialto will once again come alive with culture, connection, and celebration as the Rialto Juneteenth Jam returns on Friday, June 19, 2026, from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Ferguson Park. This community event pays tribute to Juneteenth by highlighting Black history, resilience, and excellence through food, music, film, sports, and art.

“The Juneteenth Jam is more than an event—it’s a full community experience designed to reinforce positive, family-oriented spaces while uplifting local voices, businesses, and organizations across the Inland Empire,” said Juneteenth Jam Founder Vickie Davis.

A Celebration of Culture and Community Attendees can expect an immersive day filled with:

- Live music and performances
- Food trucks and local vendors
- Youth sports competitions and basketball tournaments
- A skatepark takeover & 3-point shootouts
- Cultural exhibits and art installations
- Interactive games and family activities

Signature experiences include:

- Miss Juneteenth Scholarship Pageant
- Community Cook-Off Competition
- Women’s 3v3 Basketball Tournament
- Classic Car Show
- Dominoes and Bid Whist tournaments



A special highlight of the event is the art exhibit honoring local women making history, showcasing powerful portraits and stories that celebrate Black womanhood, leadership, and legacy in the Inland Empire.

“The Juneteenth Jam is supported by local community organizations, including the City of Rialto, Jam Collective Foundation, the National Council of Negro Women, the Mayor Deborah Robertson Foundation, Inland Em-

pire Pastors, DJ Sassy B, The Black Voice news, Inland Valley News, local Divine Nine chapters, Say Go EJ, COPE, Dameron Communications, and others,” said Davis. “Together, these organizations are bringing the community together for a day of joy, empowerment, and connection.”

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On Juneteenth, I’ll Celebrate Black Music at Andrew Jackson’s Plantation

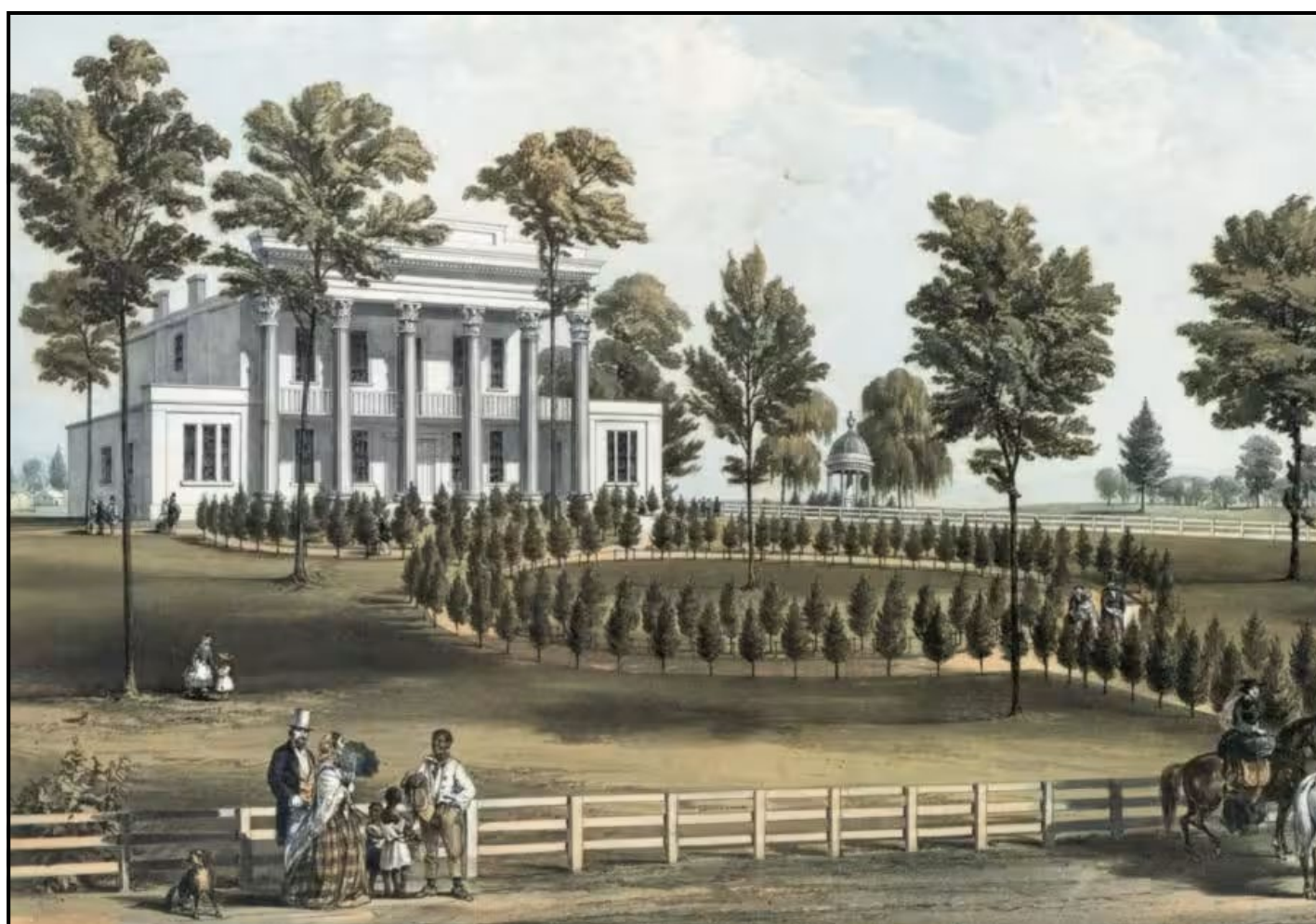
The ground at the Hermitage is sacred and stained, and the music made by enslaved people and their progeny is what still feeds this country’s hope.

This Juneteenth I will stand at the Hermitage and help celebrate Black music. The Hermitage was Andrew Jackson’s plantation, outside Nashville. I want to be honest about how strange that is.

I am descended from slaves and from the men who owned and abused them. The men who denied them their God-given right to freedom. My family was enslaved by the Blands of Virginia. Richard Bland was the famous one. He was a patriot before there was a country. He told the king and Parliament that a shackle chafes a man no matter how well you polish it. His young cousin Thomas Jefferson asked him to bring a bill to make it easier to free the enslaved. Bland did it. He was denounced as an enemy of his country. Then he went home and kept his thirty. He died still holding them.

That is my inheritance. My grandmother, Mamie Bland Todd, is the griot of our family. She carries two hundred years of it. Her

See "On Juneteenth..." page 8



JUNETEENTH ★ SPECIAL ★

Letter to the Editor:

Don't Juneteenth Our Community

By Regina Wilson and Brandon Brooks | California Black Media



Regina Wilson

extraordinary strain. This is not just a budget cut. It is a direct threat to the information infrastructure that Black communities and other historically underserved Californians rely on to understand policy, access resources, and participate fully in civic life.

One of the most fundamental rights of citizenship is the right to be informed not misled, not buried under headlines, not left to sort through rumors and half-truths. People need trusted news sources that can explain how a federal order, a state budget, or a city decision will shape their everyday lives, from housing and health care to education and voting rights.

This is where the Black Press plays its unique role. Los Angeles is home to the largest collective of Black owned media that have long served Black Los Angeles as civic institutions that understand the history and political realities of Black communities in Southern California. In Sacramento, The Sacramento Observer helps readers understand how decisions at the state capitol affect Black families and businesses. In San Diego, the San Diego Voice & Viewpoint anchors community understanding where local choices on housing, policing, and education carry immediate consequences. These outlets explain not just what happened, but why it matters, who it affects, and what is at stake context, not just content.

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Win With Gwen 2026 Announces Strong Early Endorsements Across San Bernardino County



Dr. Gwen Dowdy-Rodgers

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CA —The Win with Gwen 2026 campaign is proud to announce an impressive and growing list of early endorsements for Dr. Gwen Dowdy-Rodgers' campaign for San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools. These endorsements reflect broad support from educational leaders, community advocates, business leaders, elected officials, labor partners, and residents who recognize Dr. Dowdy-Rodgers' unwavering commitment to students, families, and public education throughout San Bernardino County.

"These early endorsements are incredibly humbling," said Dr. Gwen Dowdy-Rodgers. "They represent a shared belief that every student deserves access to high-quality educational opportunities, strong community part-

nerships, and leadership that puts children first. I am grateful for the trust and confidence these leaders have placed in our campaign."

Throughout her career, Dr. Dowdy-Rodgers has championed educational equity, student achievement, workforce development, and community engagement. As a current member of the San Bernardino County Board of Education, she has focused on fiscal responsibility, transparency, and ensuring that all students—regardless of zip code—can succeed.

The campaign's growing coalition reflects support from diverse sectors across the county and demonstrates strong momentum heading into the 2026 election cycle.

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Juneteenth is more than a commemoration of delayed freedom. It is a warning about what happens when people are denied timely access to truth, power, and the information they need to act. Freedom delayed is freedom denied. In 2026, that lesson still applies. When our communities are the last to know how decisions are made in Sacramento, Washington, or City Hall, we remain locked out of full citizenship in the way that matters most: access to information with context.

That is why the Legislature's proposed 2026–27 California State Budget is so alarming. As released, it excludes funding for the Propel Initiative and the California Local News Fellowship two programs that have helped local and ethnic media at a time when journalism is under

Pacific High Honored for Expanding College Access Through Exemplary Dual Enrollment



A large number of Pacific High School’s Class of 2025 earned a pink Dual Enrollment stole for completing at least 40 high school credits through dual enrollment or articulated courses. (Photo by Corina Borsuk and provided courtesy of SBCUSD) Story on page 6.

Rallying Around *Sisters*

Perinatal Equity in San Bernardino County

But there is hope—and people are taking action. That’s where FIMR, the Fetal Infant Mortality Review, comes in.

FIMR is a local group of doctors, nurses, community leaders, and neighbors. They work together to learn why some babies die and how to stop it from happening. They look at real cases (mom’s and baby’s information is kept private) and share ideas to help make care better for families.



In San Bernardino County, Black babies are almost three times more likely to die before their first birthday than white babies. From 2018 to 2023, the number of babies born too early went up by more than 10%. Black mothers also have a higher chance of feeling sad or depressed during pregnancy, which can affect both mom and baby.



Together, we can build healthy beginnings for Black families.

For more information, visit dph.sbcounty.gov/mcah or email askMCAH@SBCounty.gov.



Public Health

FARSB Asks for Community Support to End Child Hunger During Summer

Double Your Impact with Matched Donations up to \$40,000 through Local Subaru Dealer

RIVERSIDE, CA---- Feeding America Riverside | San Bernardino (FARSB) is asking the Inland Empire (IE) community to help the food bank end child hunger over the summer season when families lose access to free school meals, see higher utility bills, and grapple with childcare. This campaign features a match for each donation made during the season, up to \$40,000 thanks to DCH Subaru of Riverside.

“School meals are essential nutrition for many students, but summertime causes some children to go without as families juggle rising costs and additional financial burdens like high utility costs or water bills,” Vanesa Rangel-Mercado, Interim CEO, said. “Supporting hunger-relief programs during the summer ensures families don’t have to sacrifice one basic need for another.”

Households with children are more likely to experience hunger due to the higher cost of living. During the summertime, there are even more financial hurdles thanks to increased utility costs from cooling systems or fans, daycare costs for working parents, and the need for higher water intake to stay properly hydrated.



Each of these can be stressors, but all together, it causes food insecurity to steeply rise and can allow children to go without the nutritious meals they need, especially in extreme heat.

Over 50% of Californians say that rising utility bills are a problem for their household, and that issue is made worse during the summer months when the heat rises, and children are home during the day. The IE is home to dozens

of cities that reach high temperatures, where utilities are the least affordable, compounding the issue further for those who deal with food insecurity. Supporting hunger-relief during this time allows families to plan for higher bills without sacrificing meals.

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Californians

Front page story

Betty Wright: Legacy Lessons in Black Music

Continued from page 4

Pacific High Honored

SAN BERNARDINO, CA— During its April 21 meeting, the San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD) Board of Education honored Pacific High School for earning a 2026 California Exemplary Dual Enrollment Award from the California Department of Education (CDE).

"I think what makes earning the Exemplary Dual Enrollment Award extra special for Pacific is that we aren't a school geared specifically towards dual enrollment. Instead, we are what many community members would see as a standard comprehensive high school, but we are doing extraordinary things to make sure that all of our students—no matter where they start out in life or where they plan on going—have as many opportunities as possible so they are free to choose the path they want to take," Pacific Principal Dr. Natalie Raymundo said.

Pacific is one of only three schools in San Bernardino County to earn the award in 2026.

"I could not be more proud of Pacific for earning an Exemplary Dual Enrollment Award from the CDE," SBCUSD Superintendent Mauricio Arellano said. "It is further proof that Pacific High and all of SBCUSD SHINES. It proves that we mean what we say when we tell the community that our District is a serious academic institution and that we are preparing all students to be both college and career ready."

The benefits of being concurrently enrolled in high school and college courses are many. Participating students benefit from the additional rigor of college-level coursework, the opportunity to earn both high school and college credit for every college course, the financial benefit of not having to pay for college courses taken as part of a dual enrollment program and more.

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Continued from the front page

BOTTOM LINE: Juneteenth is Freedom's 'Unfinished Song'



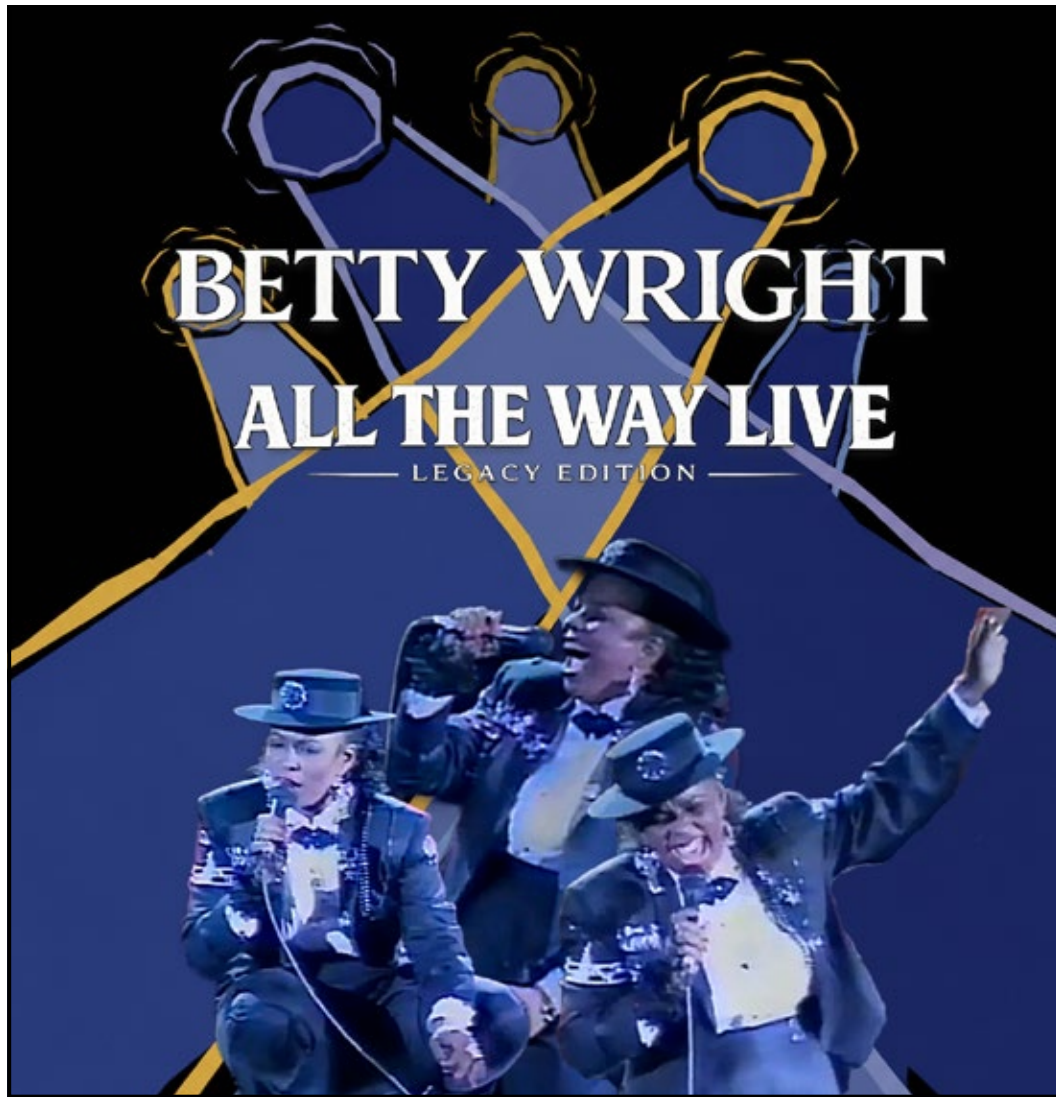
JUNETEENTH was/is the title of our unfinished song. Verses of success, despite hate, are part of our playlist! Verses of stolen inventions, music, land and lives are not just the Blues; they represent the 'never quit' tenacity that has pushed Black folk to make the highest level of contribution to America's successful evolution!

We celebrated Juneteenth before it was made a federal holiday in 2020 by the Biden Administration! Some suggest that the naming of the national holiday was more for America's conscience than for celebrating Black Folks freedom... They justify that attitude by pointing to the vital statistics that describe Black people's freedom status in America... Black infants die at twice the rate of white infants... Black men are

disproportionately incarcerated... Black folk are twice as likely to be unemployed... Black home ownership is about 45% while white home ownership is about 75%... White families hold roughly 6 to 7 times the wealth of Black Families.

It is not news that there are some who continue the tradition of hate and are pushing to expand those disparities! Nor is it news that the quest to finish our unfinished song is ongoing, and that every June 19th is a reminder to celebrate the lives and commitments of heroes and she-roes past, present and future.

Let us 'Walk together children, developing and writing new verses to our Unfinished Juneteenth Freedom song!



All The Way Live - Cover art

As we celebrate Juneteenth this week, a lot of the conversation centers on freedom, self-determination, and the ability to build something that can be passed from one generation to the next.

For Black creators, that conversation extends beyond music itself. There are layers and levels to this. Who wrote it and who sang it matters, but so does:

- Who owns it?
- Who controls the recordings?
- Who benefits when those songs continue generating value years—even decades—after they were created?

Few artists understood those questions better than Betty Wright.

Most people know Betty Wright as the voice behind classics like "Clean Up Woman," "Tonight Is the Night," "Girls Can't Do What Guys Do," and "No Pain, No Gain." They know her as a six-time Grammy nominee, a Grammy Award winner, a producer, songwriter, vocal coach, and one of the most sampled female artists in hip-hop history. Her vocal and songwriting influence can still be heard throughout contemporary R&B, and viral social

media clips introduced her to a new generation as the "Queen of the Whistle Register."

But Betty Wright's most important legacy might not be a hit record.

It may be a business decision she made more than forty years ago.

In 1985, after another frustrating experience with the major label system, Betty Wright decided to take a leap of faith.

She launched her own independent record company. Ms. B Records was born at a time when major labels controlled almost every aspect of the industry. There was no social media. No digital distribution. No streaming services. No direct-to-fan marketing platforms.

Today, independent artists can upload music to digital platforms from their phones. In the mid-1980s, independence looked very different. There was no Spotify, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, or Bandcamp. There were no digital distributors or direct-to-fan sales platforms.

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Rep. Aguilar Helps Block Unfair Housing Rule for Mixed-Status Immigrant Families

Rep. Aguilar helped prevent a dangerous rule that would put U.S. citizen children who live in mixed immigration status households at risk of being evicted and becoming homeless

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Pete Aguilar (CA-33) recently helped pass a bipartisan amendment to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) bill to stop the Trump administration's unlawful and dangerous mixed-status housing rule that would take away housing from U.S. citizen children who live in mixed immigration status households.

Last month, Rep. Pete Aguilar questioned Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Scott Turner in a House Appropriations subcommittee hearing about this unfair and unprecedented housing rule. During the questioning, Secretary Turner admitted that HUD's rulemaking authority does not supersede U.S. law. This line of questioning helped lead to the bipartisan passage of the amendment preventing the rule in the final version of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 THUD bill. The bill will now go to the full U.S. House of Representatives for a vote.

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This Roadside Worker Appreciation Week, Make the Move to Save a Life

By Wayne Wilson, Highway Safety Education Campaign Manager, Caltrans

Roadside workers put their lives on the line every day to help people traveling on California's roads. Their work allows us to arrive at our destinations and return home safely. Many of these people are tow truck drivers, Freeway Service Patrol teams, and Caltrans crews who stop to assist drivers. To mark their valuable service, every third week in June is Roadside Assistance Worker Appreciation Week, dedicated to honoring roadside workers and the critical work they accomplish. This year, we also want to urge drivers to uphold California's Slow Down, Move Over law.

The law is simple: If you see any vehicle stopped on the side of the road with flashing hazard lights, you must slow down or move over a lane when it is safe to do so. If you cannot move over, you must slow to a safe and reasonable speed. This protects workers, stranded drivers, passengers, and families traveling on our roads.

Too many people are struck and killed on the roadside near fast-moving traffic. In 2023,

crashes involving a parked or working vehicle claimed 176 lives across California. Many of these tragedies were preventable if drivers had slowed down or moved over. Roadside Assistance Worker Appreciation Week, observed June 14 to 20, is a reminder that highway workers deserve the same consideration from drivers as everyone else on the roadways.

What First Responders See

To understand the danger roadside workers face, see the reality they experience on the job. Romell Effinger, a AAA tow truck operator who has helped drivers for nine years, lived through a moment that changed how he sees this work.

One night on Highway 99, during a heavy storm, he was helping a stranded driver near an off-ramp when a car spun out beside him. A second car crashed into it, pushing the vehicle toward the back of his truck and into the space where he had been standing only moments be-

See "This Road..." page 8



Songs of Freedom: Riverside Juneteenth Celebration to Honor Music, Resistance and Joy



RIVERSIDE, CA--- The Civil Rights Institute of Inland Southern California will celebrate Juneteenth with “Songs of Freedom: Music of Resistance & Joy,” a family-friendly event honoring the powerful role music has played throughout Black history.

The celebration will take place Friday, June 19, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Main Library, located at 3900 Mission Inn Avenue in Riverside, California.

Guests are invited to rejoice in the music that guided generations through struggle, resistance, hope

and freedom. The event will highlight how Black music has served as a source of strength, cultural expression and joy while helping communities persevere through some of the most difficult chapters in American history.

Families can enjoy a free children’s craft corner hosted by The Black Arts Museum and the Main Library. The Civil Rights Institute of Inland Southern California will also host a free scavenger hunt for guests of all ages.

Following the daytime activities, the celebration will continue from 2 to 4 p.m. with a free performance by Empower You Edutainment. The performance will explore the

powerful role music has played in Black history and its lasting influence on culture, community and movements for justice.

“Songs of Freedom” offers residents an opportunity to celebrate the past while inspiring future generations. Through music, history and interactive activities, the event will recognize Juneteenth as both a celebration of freedom and a reminder of the continued importance of preserving Black stories and cultural contributions.

Admission is free, and the entire family is encouraged to attend. For additional information, contact the Main Library at 951-826-5201.

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This Roadside Worker Appreciation Week

fore. The California Highway Patrol had to shut down the highway so he could finish the job safely.

Experiences like this stay with roadside workers. They stand inches from fast-moving traffic, where failure to provide that much needed buffer can mean the difference between life and death. Romell’s story is not rare. Nation-

al data shows that Black Americans experience the highest traffic fatality rates per mile traveled, which means our communities are more at risk when drivers do not slow down or move over.

To continue, visit westsidestorynewspaper.com.

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On Juneteenth, I’ll Celebrate Black Music

great-grandfather Frederick was the only enslaved man named in his owner’s will, and the will was written to protect him. The man who owned Frederick was his own brother. That is how close the blood runs. Thomas Jefferson is my cousin. He wrote that all men are created equal. Robert E. Lee is my cousin too. He took up arms to keep my other ancestors in chains. I carry the blood of the man who

argued for freedom and the blood of those he would not free. I resent his cruelty. I pray my children show his courage against the men who would be kings. That is the duality of this nation.

So, I know something about awkward ground.

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CLASSIFIED / LEGAL SECTION

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE - CHANGE OF NAME
 CASE #: CIVSB2616782
 PETITIONER OR ATTORNEY: ARBELLA KASHTO, 504 TORITO LANE, DIAMOND, CA 91765
 Telephone: (909) 760-8043
 E-Mail Address (OPTIONAL): N/A
 ATTORNEY FOR (name): PETITIONER IN PROPER SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO
 STREET ADDRESS: 247 WEST THIRD ST., SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92415
 MAILING ADDRESS: SAME

BRANCH NAME: CIVIL COURTHOUSE
 PETITION OF: ARBELLA KASHTO
 TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
 Petitioner ARBELLA KASHTO has filed a petition with the clerk of this Court for a decree changing names as follows: Present name: THOMAS JAMES KASHTO-GREEN to Proposed name: THOMAS JAMES KASHTO. THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause,

if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing. NOTICE OF HEARING:
 Date: 07/24/2026 Time: 8:30 A.M. Dept: S35

The address of the court is the same as noted above. A copy of this ORDER to Show Cause must be published at least once each week for four successive weeks before the date set for hearing on the petition in a newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county (specify newspaper): WESTSIDE STORY NEWSPAPER
 Date: JUNE 09, 2026
 Sign: JOSEPH T. ORTIZ, JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
 Wss 26-014. 6-11, 6-18, 6-25, 7-2-2026