

SPELMAN Messenger

A Course of Challenges

Lisa Herring, C'94,
takes the helm of
Atlanta Public Schools

INSIDE:

COVID-19 Alumnae Heroes
Saluting Our Educators

SPELMAN Messenger

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ALUMNAE NOTES

Alumnae Notes is dedicated to the following:

- Education
- Personal (birth of a child or marriage)
- Professional

Please include the date of the event in your submission.

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Take Notes is dedicated to the following alumnae achievements:

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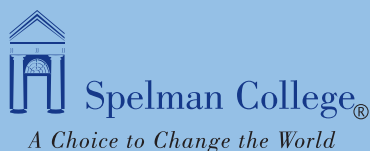
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Book Notes is dedicated to alumnae and faculty authors.

Please submit review copies.

IN MEMORIAM

We honor our Spelman sisters. If you receive notice of the death of a Spelman sister, please contact the Office of Alumnae Engagement at 404-270-5048 or Linda Patton, associate director of alumnae engagement, at lpattton@spelman.edu. *For verification purposes, please include a printed program, newspaper acknowledgment or electronic link with your submission.*



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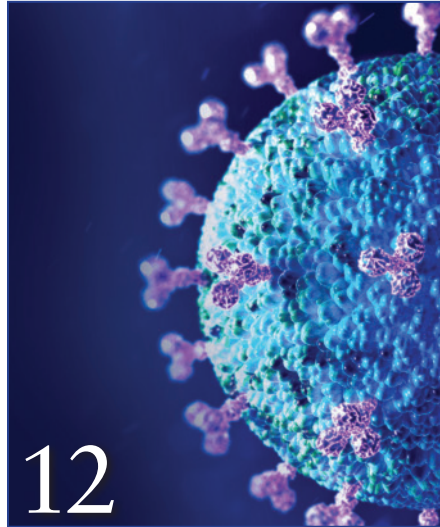
Founded in 1885, the *Spelman Messenger* is the alumnae magazine of Spelman College and is committed to educating, serving and empowering Black women. The content of the Messenger is designed to share news and events about the College and alumnae, as well as discuss Spelman's leadership role in addressing a wide range of issues relevant to our community.



On the Cover

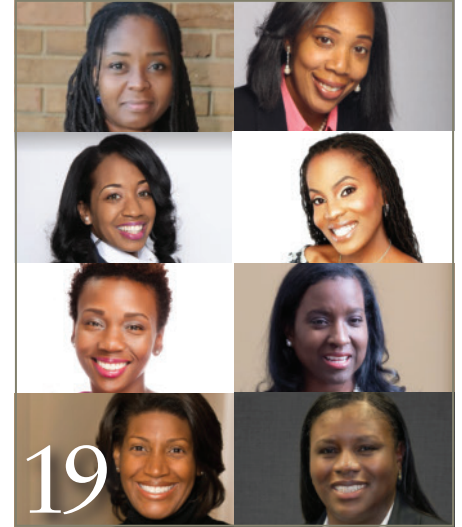
Lisa Herring takes the helm of Atlanta Public Schools.

COVER PHOTO BY RAFTERMEN PHOTOGRAPHY



Alumnae Behind COVID-19 Enemy Lines

Meet women with a Spelman-nurtured dedication to serve communities of color affected by health disparities.



Saluting Our Educators

Spelman-trained educators stand on the foundation of service leadership.

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A salute to women who educate

Every Possible Way to Make a Difference

Spelman champions education. Our reason for being is the intellectual and personal development of Black women who will lead positive change in our world. For 139 years, we have done exceptionally well in fulfilling this charge.

One of the many examples of the success of our mission is the alumna we feature on the cover of this issue of the Spelman Messenger: Lisa Herring, Ed.D., C'94, the new superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools. We are pleased to celebrate her appointment to this critical leadership position at a challenging time for the city's children.

A Spelman professor and mentor of Herring recalls that Dr. Herring was someone who has "a daring and a determination to pursue every single possible way of making a difference." No doubt, this attitude was cultivated under the tutelage of the College's outstanding faculty and staff who challenged and supported Herring as a student.

In fact, the determination to pursue every possible way to make a difference is inherent in the Spelman culture. This includes not only a dedication to the work of education, but also the profound caring for each member of this community who is an essential part of who we are.

I could not be more proud of the way our striving for excellence and concern for one another have guided the College's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition to online education certainly has not been easy, but faculty and staff are committed to providing our students an outstanding education – no matter what – and are working tirelessly to achieve this goal.

In March, Spelman began collaborating with the other Atlanta University Center institutions through the AUC Coronavirus Task Force to coordinate AUC-wide policies and procedures to

address the disease, including our decisions to close our campuses and shift to remote learning in the spring. Months later, the AUC made the difficult decision to offer instruction exclusively online in the fall.

In May, I established Spelman's task force on planning the 2020-2021 academic year. A team of 60 faculty and staff participated in working groups in five areas: healthy and safe workplace and residential life; instructional and research continuity; student life and community life; budget and operations; and technological support.

Because of the work of the task force, the College:

- converted all courses to an online format;
- trained all faculty in online educational pedagogy;
- equipped faculty, staff and students with technology resources for a virtual environment;
- refunded room and board costs and student fees;
- reduced tuition and fees by 14% for fall 2020;
- increased funding of institutional scholarships;
- provided emergency financial resources for students affected by COVID-19; and
- enhanced support services provided through the Student Success Center.

We designed these and other measures to serve our students in every possible way so that we can make the difference for them that only a Spelman education can. The steps had an immediate impact on enrollment.

According to a report published in September by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, undergraduate enrollment at the nation's colleges and universities declined 2.5%



overall due to the pandemic, and 3.8% at private, four-year institutions.

This fall, enrollment at Spelman increased 5.4% over last year. We take this vote of confidence as the College's responsibility to meet the expectations of our students. Through surveys, course corrections and a constant examination of what is needed to make online instruction work, we are learning what is necessary to cross this bridge over troubled waters.

Throughout these trying times, the support of alumnae has been crucial to our students and to the College. I am sincerely grateful to Spelman's faculty, staff, alumnae and supporters for all you do to help keep the College strong for the young women who entrust their education to us.

Onward,

Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ph.D.
President, Spelman College

SERVING THE SPELMAN SECRET SAUCE ONLINE

In response to COVID-19, the College planned early for a successful transition to virtual teaching and learning

BY ADRIENNE S. HARRIS

When President Mary Schmidt Campbell announced in July that because of the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in metropolitan Atlanta Spelman would be offering all its fall instruction online, the College was already geared up to make the shift.

In March, when coronavirus infections began spreading in the United States, Spelman closed its campus temporarily and offered classes remotely. Within a week, 100 faculty members had been trained to use Moodle, the College's learning management system, Zoom and email to stay connected and deliver courses to students.

In May, anticipating the virus might last longer than predicted, President Campbell established the task force on planning the 2020-2021 academic year. Part of its charge was to develop strategies to ensure students would continue to receive a quality education – whether they could return to campus for in-person instruction in the fall, or not.

“Last spring, Spelman’s faculty heroically shifted to emergency remote delivery of all our in-person classes. They made do and guided our students to the end of the semester,” says Sharon Davies, J.D., provost and vice president for academic affairs.

“But given the likelihood that most of our classes would have to remain online for a time, we committed ourselves to do more than make do,” says Davies, co-chair of the task force. “We moved our focus from emergency remote instruction to excellent online education.”

Online education, as distinguished from remote education, involves not just the use of technology, but also the mastery of best practices for delivering quality instruction virtually. This includes how to structure assignments, discussions, projects and assessments that are student-centered and highly engaging in an online environment.

Dolores Bradley Brennan, Ph.D., vice provost for faculty, manages the recruitment and training of faculty for Spelman’s summer online program and was tasked with coordinating faculty training for teaching online in the fall. She collaborated with Blanche Bryant, enterprise engagement manager for Spelman Technology Services, who redesigned the College’s Online Course Development Program so faculty could complete it in six weeks.

“When our faculty were told they needed to be trained in online pedagogy, so we could deliver a quality experience for our students, there was no discussion,” says Brennan. “Everyone was on board.”

OCDP includes modules in online course design, building an online learning community, and teaching and learning with technology. When it was offered in the spring, 40 faculty new to distance education took the course to prepare to teach online during the summer. By the start of fall classes, another 90 faculty had completed the course, which STS offers throughout the semester.

“We’re not just throwing together our approach to online education,” says Tiffany Watson, Ph.D., associate provost for executive projects and initiatives. “We are being very intentional about what we need to do to ensure our students receive the same Spelman ‘secret sauce’ they would get on campus.”

Faculty gain valuable new teaching skills

Aditi Pai, Ph.D., associate professor of biology, participated in OCDP and taught her first online course this summer. She wanted to deliver solid content and skills to her students, but also get to know them. So, Pai introduced a strategy she had not used in her in-person classes: oral exams.

“That was my solution to making sure students got one-on-one attention from me,” says Pai, who also co-directs Spelman’s Teaching Resource and Research Center. “It was incredibly effective. I appreciated seeing the students’ thought processes, and they appreciated getting instant feedback.”

“Dr. Pai definitely made online learning way better than I thought it would be,” says Chioma Ezumezu, a junior biology



Aditi Pai, Ph.D., associate professor of biology

major from McDonough, Georgia. “Plus, she made the course relevant. We learned how the pandemic started, the molecular side of it, and how it is affecting us as humans.”

Veta Goler, Ph.D., professor of drama and dance, also taught her first online course this summer. Each week, she sent students a mini video lecture about the upcoming topic and asked them to post comments about the reading assignments – and comment on each other’s posts – before and after class discussions.

“I had them do a lot of reflection,” says Goler. “I was impressed with the depth and relationship beauty of their conversations — the thoughtful, respectful way they talked with each other. I don’t think the virtual environment necessarily means that you can’t have substantive connections and interactions.”

Courtney Hairston, a first-year student from Englewood, New Jersey, who is considering a major in international studies or English, says Goler gave the course a personal feel. “From the energy she projected on the welcome video where she introduced herself and outlined the course, I thought, this is going to be OK,” she says.

Students adopt mindsets to thrive online

At the same time Spelman prepared faculty to be effective online teachers, it prepared students to be effective online learners.

Jennifer S. Johnson, director of the Student Success Program, understands that some students may feel they do better with in-person learning. Her goal is to help them realize that although online learning is different, they can be just as successful at it. “It’s a matter of cultivating a growth mindset that casts off notions about perceived barriers to educational achievement,” she says.

To help students thrive in a virtual environment, the College encourages them to take an online learning readiness assessment that evaluates their learning styles and offers customized recommendations to improve communication skills and study habits. Success programs provide additional support, as needed, including workshops, coaching and study groups.

**“DR. PAI
DEFINITELY MADE
ONLINE LEARNING
WAY BETTER THAN I
THOUGHT IT WOULD
BE.”**

— CHIOMA EZUMEZU,
JUNIOR BIOLOGY MAJOR



Students in Aditi Pai’s online class

The office also strives to foster community among students who are learning online. “The key is making them feel connected, even though we are in a million different places,” says Johnson.

For example, the Women in STEM Summer Bridge, a six-week program for first-year students who plan to major in science, technology, engineering or mathematics, usually occurs on campus. This year it was completely virtual. Wi-STEM helped students get to know each other by assigning them to work together in small groups.

“Without the in-person aspect of the program, we were drawn to each other in other ways,” says Paige Ashton, a first-year biology premed major from San Jose, California. “We began to open up to each other during virtual study hall sessions, lean on each other for support in class and homework, and slowly formed bonds and friendships.”

Johnson assigned each incoming student to a success team that included the class dean, major adviser, success leader and study group leader. “The message to our new students is that you never have to meet a challenge alone,” she says. “We partner with other offices so that when students reach out for support, they are fully integrated into the entire Spelman network.”

Ready for the new reality

Myra Burnett, vice president for institutional effectiveness, believes Spelman’s ability to pivot to distance education stems from the College’s commitment to its mission. “Even in the midst of a pandemic, we are still learning and still learning at a high level,” she says.

One area where the College is continually expanding knowledge is STS, which provides students, faculty and staff the technical infrastructure and training they need to navigate the College’s online platforms.

“John Wilson, our chief information officer, Blanche Bryant, and their teams have been tested in every way to provide outstanding service during our response to COVID-19,” says Burnett. “They have passed the test every time.”

Jenay R. Sermon, Ph.D., C’2005, founder of Learn Ubique, an educational consulting firm, sees the same commitment

Students agreed

(from mid semester survey, April)

The question was: How comfortable are you with Zoom classes?

“I feel as though the Zoom sessions that we have are very similar to regular class. I also feel as though I am obtaining information, as well if not better, than being in class. This mainly being that the breakout rooms do not have the distractions of the other groups.”

“Even though we’re having class virtually, it still has the same learning environment as we had in class. I’m still able to understand the information that is relayed to us. I think class has been going well thus far.”

to ongoing learning among the faculty. During the summer, she co-facilitated the OCPD training and developed a self-assessment tool for the program. This fall, Sermon will listen in on classes to offer feedback on course design and delivery.

“The faculty are doing an amazing job,” she says. “Even if we go back to normal, whatever that is, Spelman has now trained its faculty to perform on a different scale. Maybe some of them will become champions of online education and find they love online teaching.”

Watson believes that faculty who love to teach online will be in the right place at the right time for Spelman’s next move into distance education. Since 2018, the College has been exploring the possibility of developing an online, nondegree program targeted to African American women.

“We asked ourselves: ‘What can Spelman offer and how can we do it in a way that is uniquely Spelman – that’s powerful, aligned with our mission, and totally different from what any

other schools are offering?’” she says.

The results of a feasibility study indicated strong potential for the College to develop certificate programs in several areas, including project management, minority health and women’s leadership. The initiative, which is being planned for launch in spring 2021, would serve nontraditional learners, as well as Spelman students who could earn certificates as add-on, stackable credentials.

“The Spelman tradition is to be innovators,” says Watson. “Our response to the pandemic and the way we are strengthening our ability to deliver online education is just another example of how Spelman always rises to the challenges and opportunities of the day.”

Adrienne S. Harris is an Atlanta-based strategy and communications consultant.

PANDEMIC OPENS LENS ON AGE FOR SPELMAN INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS

BY CONNIE GREEN FREIGHTMAN

Alix Swann, C'2022, and five other Spelman Independent Scholars were packed for an early morning flight from Atlanta to the Bahamas. They were looking forward to conducting research at the University of the Bahamas and oral history interviews with four centenarians on the island.

The next day, March 6, 2020, the College abruptly canceled all research travel because of the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, the scholars headed home to complete classes remotely for the rest of the semester.

“The pandemic was really upsetting because most of our work happens in person. It’s harder to create that bond over technology,” says Swann, an international studies major from Silver Spring, Maryland. “So, I knew one of the main parts of the Spelman Independent Scholars Study Program that I looked forward to was taken away.”

Disappointed but determined, Swann and her classmates shifted their age-focused research online, interviewing ‘women of wisdom’ via Zoom, collaborating virtually on research and classwork, and writing about the impact of the pandemic on elders in their families.

In August, the scholars shared their research and writing in an online journal, “They Saw the Sun First.” The journal includes highlights of their Zoom and pre-pandemic, in-person interviews with 10 women of wisdom, including Spelman President Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ph.D.; educator and activist Fleda Jackson, Ph.D., C'73; and 101-year-old Callie Terrell, the oldest working hairstylist in Tennessee.

An anthology of the scholars’ work will be added to the SIS Oral History Archives at the Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library.

For Swann, the pandemic widened the lens on age in ways she never expected. She took notice of the virus’ disproportionate impact on older people and the technology gap between the generations. It made her appreciate elders more than she ever imagined.

After her in-person research plans were nixed, Swann switched her focus to online research on the plight of older Black women in prison. Her study found the women had spent most of their lives incarcerated, primarily for nonviolent crimes.

“One of the things that stood out to me was that the

population of aging people in prison has increased by 4,000% since the war on drugs,” Swann says. “I think an interesting thing to look at would be the policy aspect of these laws to see what can be done to ensure that people are not in prison for their entire life for something so simple.”

Swann also used online platforms to amplify the voices and wisdom of elder women. On June 3, she invited her maternal and paternal grandmothers to join her for a global, intergenerational Zoom meeting on the pandemic. She was delighted to see them sign in from their homes in Maryland and Ohio.

“My paternal grandmother talked about how her father experienced the Spanish flu pandemic,” Swann says. “They used disinfectant and wore masks. They would clean and limit

“THE PANDEMIC WAS REALLY UPSETTING BECAUSE MOST OF OUR WORK HAPPENS IN PERSON. IT’S HARDER TO CREATE THAT BOND OVER TECHNOLOGY,”

— ALIX SWANN, C'2022

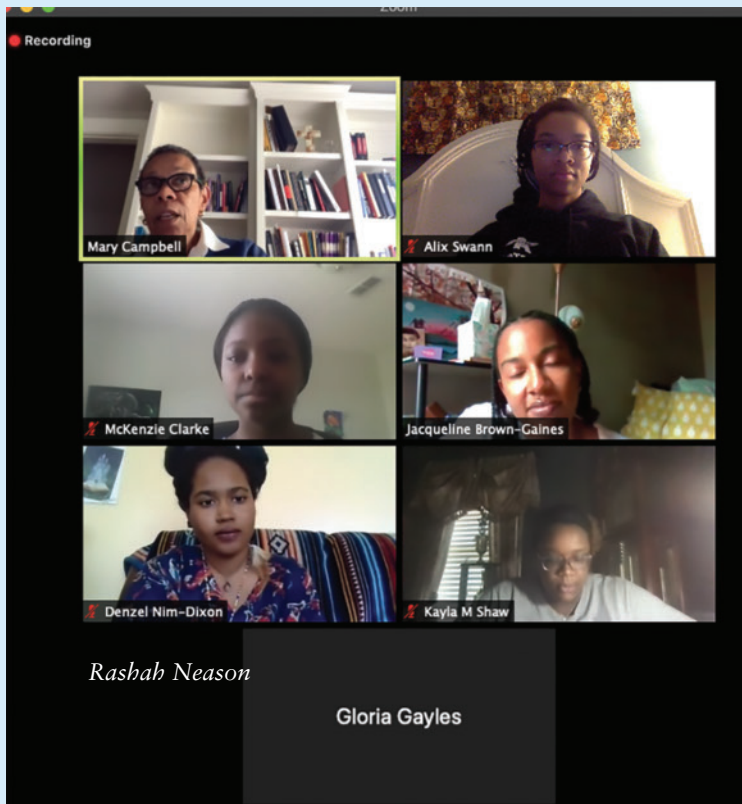


Alix Swann, C'2022, is a research fellow in the Moore Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program at UNC-Chapel Hill.

public contact, so it’s interesting that we are carrying out the same tactics 100 years later.”

In July, Swann was a featured speaker for the 24-hour, virtual Women of the World Festival. Her talk focused on her experience as a SIS scholar and the importance of elder stories as a connection to the past and in imparting life lessons for the future.

Founded in 2001, the SIS Oral History Project is an



SIS members interview Dr. Campbell.



Pictured from left are Gloria Wade Gayles, students Kayla Shaw, Rashah Neason, McKenzie Clarke, Humirah White, Alix Swann, Danielle Mitchell, Malia Todd, Jacquine Brown, Naima Castaneda Issac, and seated is author Erinn Gosser Mitchell.

interdisciplinary, independent study program designed to help students improve research and critical thinking skills by interviewing women elders and preserving their stories in the African griot tradition.

Completing online coursework amid a global health emergency wasn't easy, as COVID-19 hit home. Two scholars lost family members to the virus. Through it all, the personal experiences added depth and poignancy to their research and writing, says Gloria Wade Gayles, Ph.D., Spelman professor and founding director of the project.

"The online journal is simply amazing. The students are dealing with so much," Gayles says. "With the change to online work, Alix saw new opportunities and ran with them. Who would have thought a Spelman student would participate in an international Zoom meeting on the pandemic with her grandmothers? That's unheard of.

"We are passionate about what we are doing in spite of the way that the pandemic has impacted teaching and learning at Spelman, and across the nation and around the world," Gayles adds. "We are passionate about making something happen and happen with love and happen with depth of knowledge gathered from research and writing."

With the coronavirus outbreak forcing loved ones to social distance, Swann is glad that she didn't skip a trip to Ohio in February for her great-grandmother's 99th birthday

party. During the visit, Ermelda Naomi Cooper told her great-granddaughter stories about growing up in New Orleans. It was Swann's last in-person oral history interview for the SIS journal.

Her SIS experience has inspired Swann to continue oral history research in her family and to address ageism in her advocacy work as a Spelman social justice fellow.

"I think one thing that SIS has done really well is to help me become an independent thinker and researcher," says Swann, who plans to earn a doctorate and pursue a career in education advocacy. "As people become more aware of differences, age is something that really needs to be focused on. Information on ageism is not as widely available as information on racism or classism or sexism, and all those things intersect with age."

Connie Green Freightman is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and editor.

DONNA AKIBA HARPER RETIRES TO CONTINUE 'SIGNATURE' WORK ON LANGSTON HUGHES

BY MAYNARD EATON

MOTTO

I play it cool
And dig all jive
That's the reason
I stay alive.

My motto,
As I live and learn,
is:
*Dig And Be Dug
In Return.*

— LANGSTON HUGHES

Langston Hughes has been Donna Akiba Harper's muse throughout her 33-year career as Spelman's professor of English and African American literature.

"That's my poem," says Harper about "Motto" from Hughes's book *Montage of a Dream Deferred* published in 1950. "I love it as a person. The next poem in that book is about a night funeral, so somebody didn't stay alive. Twentieth Century African American Literature is my mainstay, and Langston Hughes is my signature.

"My forte is Langston Hughes," Harper continues. "I always introduce myself to new classes and tell them if I leave a blank [space], the answer is

Langston Hughes. That's how frequently his life or works or words are part of my references and stories."

An internationally renowned Hughes scholar, Harper has edited four volumes of short fiction by Hughes and is the author of *Not So Simple: The "Simple" Stories by Langston Hughes* (1995), which is the only book-length study of Hughes's celebrated Jesse B. Semple stories. The character Jesse B. Semple is a fascinating and comedic 1943 Black fictional character who commented both wisely and hilariously about women and race from his perch at Paddy's Bar in Harlem. Semple was conceived in a series of columns written by Hughes for the *Chicago Defender*, an influential Black press weekly publication.

"I just feel Hughes was a man of the people," opines Harper. "He was finally able to establish residence in Harlem in a brownstone, and he loved the people. He did not try to move to the suburbs. He did not try to isolate himself. So, I really resonate with him as a human being. That's why I love him."

She adds, "I discovered he loved books, as I do. And he was positive about his love of Black people, as am I. This man is loving Black people, seeing beauty in Black people in 1926, and I fell in love. It just blew my mind that he was that positive and that beautiful in his love and reverence for Black people."



“I just feel Hughes was a man of the people. He was finally able to establish residence in Harlem in a brownstone, and he loved the people. He did not try to move to the suburbs. He did not try to isolate himself.”

Harper’s former students and “my grand students” (as she calls the daughters of students who have gone through Spelman) also love and revere her.

Spelman’s Tikenya Foster Singletary, Ph.D., C’97, for example, is a senior English lecturer who calls her former professor “an authentic rock star scholar.” Harper is “quintessentially Spelman,” says Singletary, and “she really knows her craft.”

Philathia Bolton, C’2002, an assistant professor of English at the University of Akron, took five different courses under Harper — including African Diaspora and the World, and the Langston Hughes Seminar — before graduating in 2002.

“Learning from her was such a special, multilayered experience,” Bolton recalls. “She was so vibrant and charismatic and lovely. Dr. Harper is still my mentor. My students meet Dr. Harper when they meet me in the classroom.”

Cynthia Neal Spence, C’78, Spelman’s director of UNCF-Mellon Programs and associate professor of sociology, echoes those plaudits. “She exemplifies and exudes this aura of a scholar,” says her 15-yearlong friend. “There’s no one better.”

Geneva H. Baxter is Spelman’s associate dean of Undergraduate Studies and assistant professor of English, who admits she is a “cheerleader” for Harper.

“Dr. Harper is almost electrifying. She lights up a classroom,” says Baxter. “She is the premier Langston Hughes scholar.”

Baxter and Harper were both hired in 1987 by June McDonald Aldridge, a 92-year-old, 1953 Spelman graduate who has “sharp memories” of Harper.

“She was young, bright and had a very good bio,” she says, “and she was

a member of Phi Beta Kappa. That is what really turned on my president, Dr. Donald Stewart, about her. He was skeptical until he learned that. I’ve never had any regrets about hiring her.”

Harper is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Oberlin College. She also earned a master’s degree and Ph.D. from Emory University as a Danforth graduate fellow.

“People respected her very much,” Aldridge continues. “She’s done so much for Spelman. She was a leader in establishing a Phi Beta Kappa chapter at Spelman.”

Although she is not a Spelman alumna, Harper proudly says, “Spelman is home for me. Knowing that my primary audience was Black women made my life worthwhile. And, just like the elders sometimes move out of the family house and go to the retirement center, I’m just doing that. I’m still part of the family, but I moved into senior living.”

Harper, who also served as Spelman’s dean of Undergraduate Studies from January 2003 to December 2004, says she is ready to release the academic labor of mandatory meetings, grading papers and office hours to a new generation.

“I have other things that I want to do, so I was happy to pass that baton,” she says. “I’m very comfortable releasing my active teaching in the classroom because Dr. Sequoia Maner, the person whom we hired to teach African American literature, is a wonderful young scholar who will do a marvelous job.”

Harper, who received the 1999 Faculty Award in African American Literature and was a founding member and past president of the Langston Hughes Society, is also retiring because Arnold Rampersad, a noted biographer, literary critic and leading authority on

Langston Hughes, asked her to write the history of the 1981 Langston Hughes Study Conference.

“That resulted in the formation of the Langston Hughes Society,” she explains. “It resulted in the 16-volume publication of The Collected Works of Langston Hughes. [Rampersad] said, ‘Akiba, you realize that you and I are two of the few people still alive who were there.’”

In cleaning and purging her office, Harper found slides that one of the conference founders sent her.

“I’m going to get those turned into digital images and prints so I can work with that,” she says. “I have the program from it. I have my notes because I’m a compulsive notetaker, so I want to write that up because that may be useful for the current generation of scholars as they think about how they may want to elevate other writers, such as Sonya Sanchez or maybe Toni Morrison.”

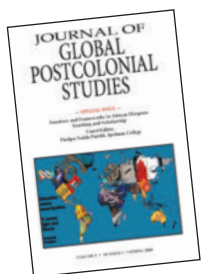
It took her weeks to sift through keepsakes and clear out her office this summer. But on her final day in late July – with a box of memorabilia in hand – Harper was greeted upon her exit with a surprise visit from friends, fellow faculty and former students, as well as Provost Sharon Davies and President Mary Schmidt Campbell.

They were there to show their appreciation and that the beloved Spelman scholar had, indeed, been “dug in return.”

Maynard Eaton is an eight-time Emmy Award-winning TV reporter, who is managing editor of the SCLC National Magazine and executive director of “The Maynard Report” and “Newsmakers Live/Journal.” He is also president of The Eaton Media Group and a journalism professor at Clark Atlanta University.

Faculty Highlights

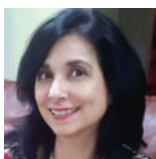
Mark Lee, Ph.D., associate professor of biology, shared his perspective on the lack of diverse voices in college biology textbooks in a recent article for ScienceNews.com titled “College Biology Textbooks Still Portray World of White Scientists.”



Pushpa Naidu Parekh, Ph.D., professor of English and director of the African Diaspora and the World program, was the guest editor for a special issue of *Journal of Global Postcolonial Studies*, 8.1 (spring 2020): “Frontiers and Frameworks in African Diaspora Teaching and Scholarship.”

The publication is the first formal collection of scholarly and pedagogical articles on ADW courses at Spelman. The College recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the ADW program, so the issue marked both a trajectory in a specific historically Black college, as well as the intentional move toward internationalizing the educational enterprise in the United States. The issue also featured several Spelman faculty contributors, including **Alix Pierre, Ph.D.**; **Anastasia Valecce, Ph.D.**; **Anne Carlson, Ph.D.**; **Francesina Jackson, Ph.D.**; **Jimmeka Guillory Wright, Ph.D.**; **A. Nayena Blankson, Ph.D.**; **Angelino Viceisza, Ph.D.**; **Bruce Wade, Ph.D.**; **Lana Lockhart, Ph.D.**; **Kathleen Phillips Lewis, Ph.D.**; **Robert Brown, Ph.D.**; and **Soraya Mekerta, Ph.D.**

Tinaz Pavri, Ph.D., division chair for social sciences and education, chair of Asian studies, and professor of political science, along with Spelman student **Cassandra Berice, C’2023**, received a Diversity Pipeline Award from the American Association for Public Opinion Research. Pavri’s research on globalization in India is informed by public opinion data from the country — especially on youth, social class, religious and ethnic identity, and gender. The pair received their award virtually at the 75th AAPOR Annual Conference and Anniversary Celebration in Atlanta, June 2020.



Fatemah Shafiei, Ph.D., associate professor and chair of the political science department, appeared on the “Eating Matters” podcast to discuss how communities of color are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards. From dangerous worksites to toxic plants built close to African

American communities, environmental racism takes a toll on the health and overall wellbeing of communities of color, Shafiei told host Jenna Liut. Shafiei is a member of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s National Environmental Justice Advisory Council and has served as an environmental justice consultant for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She’s a leader in advancing the integration of sustainability into college, university, high-school and middle-school curricula.

Nicole Taylor, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Education, has been selected as a 2020-2021 grantee by the Albany State University Center for Educational Opportunity. She will conduct research benefiting K-12 students in underserved communities. Specifically, her study will consider the need for school, family and community partnerships in urban schools. It also will consider what needs to be done in an effort to provide teacher candidates with realistic opportunities and also expose them to the challenges of family engagement through the building of programming in elementary schools.



Yonas Tekle, Ph.D., associate professor of biology, was awarded a \$390,234 grant by the National Institutes of Health to further explore his research involving reproductive behavior in microbial amoeboids, a research program pioneered at Spelman. The three-year grant is a renewal of a previous NIH grant he received in 2015. Tekle and his students discovered a new species, which they named Jaguars after the Spelman College mascot. The current grant will fund Tekle’s continued research on “Unraveling the Mechanism of Cryptic Sexual Cycle Development in Amoebae Using Comparative Genomics and Cytology,” which unravels the cytological and genetic evidence underlying the cryptic sexual life cycle of *Cochliopodium* and *Acanthamoeba*.

Dimeji Togunde, Ph.D., vice provost for global education and professor of international studies, was recently elected to a three-year term on the International Student Exchange Program’s board of directors. ISEP makes study abroad accessible to all interested students.



Leyte Winfield, Ph.D., received a Pfizer Green Chemistry Award of \$5,000 that will be used to advance Spelman’s efforts in sustainable and socially responsible chemistry.

Angelino Viceisza, Ph.D., associate professor of economics, will serve as a W. Glenn Campbell and Rita Ricardo-Campbell National Fellow and the John Stauffer National Fellow at Hoover Institution (Stanford University) during the 2020-2021 academic year. He also is co-editing a special issue on “Social Justice in Agricultural and Environmental Economics” (with Miesha Williams, Ph.D., assistant professor of economics at Morehouse College) for the *Agricultural and Resource Economics Review*.



Keith Arthur Bolden

Navigating a Virtual Theater World Amid COVID-19

BY CONNIE GREEN FREIGHTMAN

Spelman theater and performance professor Keith Arthur Bolden started spring 2020 with a much-anticipated schedule of student shows and his own lineup of film and theater productions.

When the coronavirus pandemic brought those projects to a halt, Bolden chose to focus on his gains rather than losses.

“If you leave COVID the same way you were when you entered it, then something’s wrong,” Bolden says. “Over the past few months, you have had an opportunity to shift your thoughts and ideas, and to make a lot of changes to make you eventually a better member of society.”

Sheltering at home gave him a chance to make some changes in his personal and professional lives. He meditates, works out and spends more time with his wife, actor/director Tinashe Kajese-Bolden, and their sons.

At the same time, the self-described “the acting professor” found creative ways to keep performing and stay engaged with his students. With the sudden pivot to online instruction last spring, he sought to create a virtual theater experience that would resonate with students. So, he enlisted friends in the industry, including actors Sterling K. Brown and Robert Townsend, to conduct a series of online master classes for students.

He’s also tapped into work that theater-makers are creating for virtual modes of performance.

“There are a lot of writers right now writing for the pandemic. They are writing dialogue for Zoom,” he says. “I’m thinking about using those works, but I’m also thinking of students creating their own work using the platform because I don’t know when we will be back in the theater. It’s a bit of a conundrum, but I think we need to focus on giving students what they

need to be successful in person or at home.”

An acclaimed actor and director in his own right, Bolden has embraced new opportunities in theater’s new virtual world. He’s been invited to participate in several online performances, including *The 24 Hour Plays’* presentation of “Fists Up/ Underlying Conditions.” The virtual event, a benefit for Communities United for Police Reform, featured monologues by a dozen Black artists.

Bolden is looking forward to 2021, when several of his postponed film and theater projects have been rescheduled for production or release. Upcoming projects include movie premieres for “Jungle Cruise,” starring Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, in which Bolden plays a tourist on a journey down the Amazon River, and “The Conjuring 3,” in which he portrays police Detective Sgt. Clay.

In addition, he and Alliance Theatre Spelman Leadership Fellow, Alexis Woodard, C’2020, are set to co-direct a new production of “Hands Up” at the Alliance Theatre. Produced in association with Spelman, the show features a series of monologues that depict the realities of Black America.

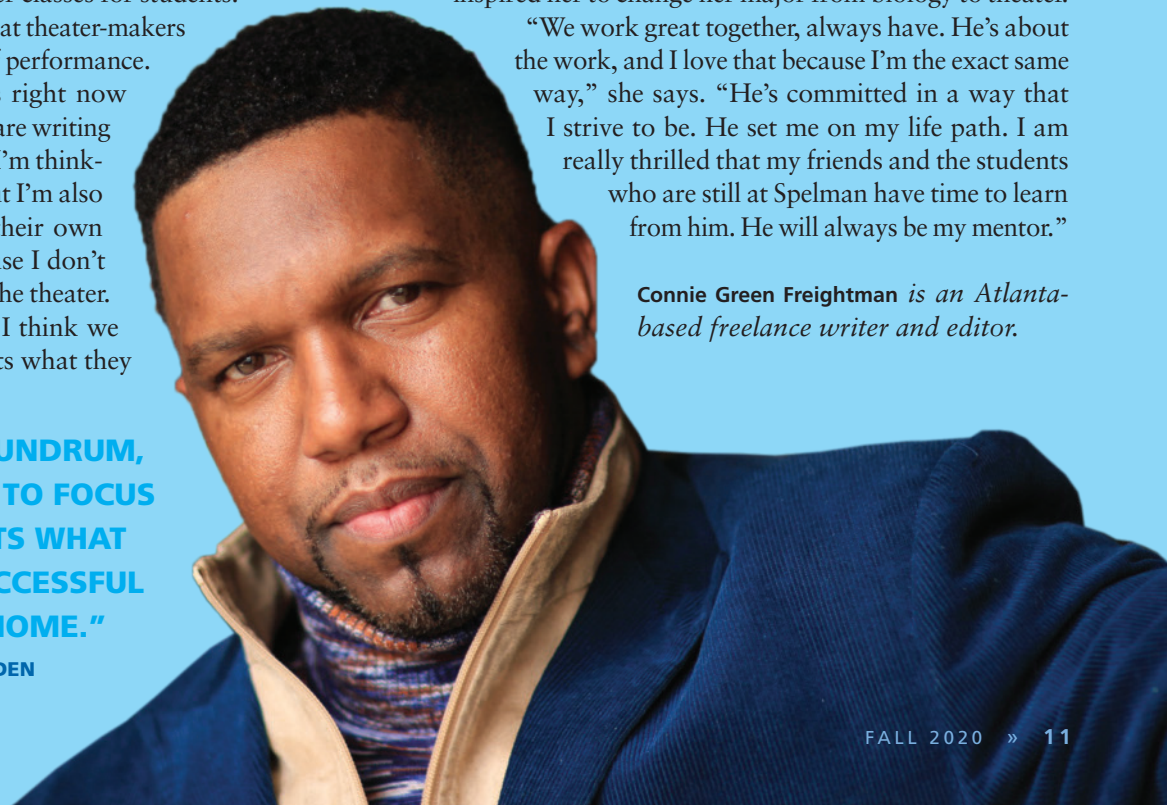
Woodard is excited to work with her former professor, who inspired her to change her major from biology to theater.

“We work great together, always have. He’s about the work, and I love that because I’m the exact same way,” she says. “He’s committed in a way that I strive to be. He set me on my life path. I am really thrilled that my friends and the students who are still at Spelman have time to learn from him. He will always be my mentor.”

Connie Green Freightman is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and editor.

**“IT’S A BIT OF A CONUNDRUM,
BUT I THINK WE NEED TO FOCUS
ON GIVING STUDENTS WHAT
THEY NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL
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— KEITH ARTHUR BOLDEN



Working Behind the Enemy Lines of Disease

A trio of graduates exemplifies the success and commitment Spelman College has in educating and training women to become servant leaders.

INTRO BY RENITA MATHIS

Christina Evans, C'2016, Sonya Frontin, C'2007, and Lillian Hardy, C'2003, have a Spelman-nurtured dedication to serve communities of color affected disproportionately by varied health disparities, including COVID-19. They all hold advanced degrees and are engaged in the biological sciences, public health and law, all working directly or indirectly to fight a current invisible disease.

Evans is a COVID-19 researcher, and Frontin is an epidemiologist and public health quarantine officer/public health adviser. Hardy is a lawyer who filed a lawsuit against prison officials in Louisiana for failing to protect inmates from contracting coronavirus.

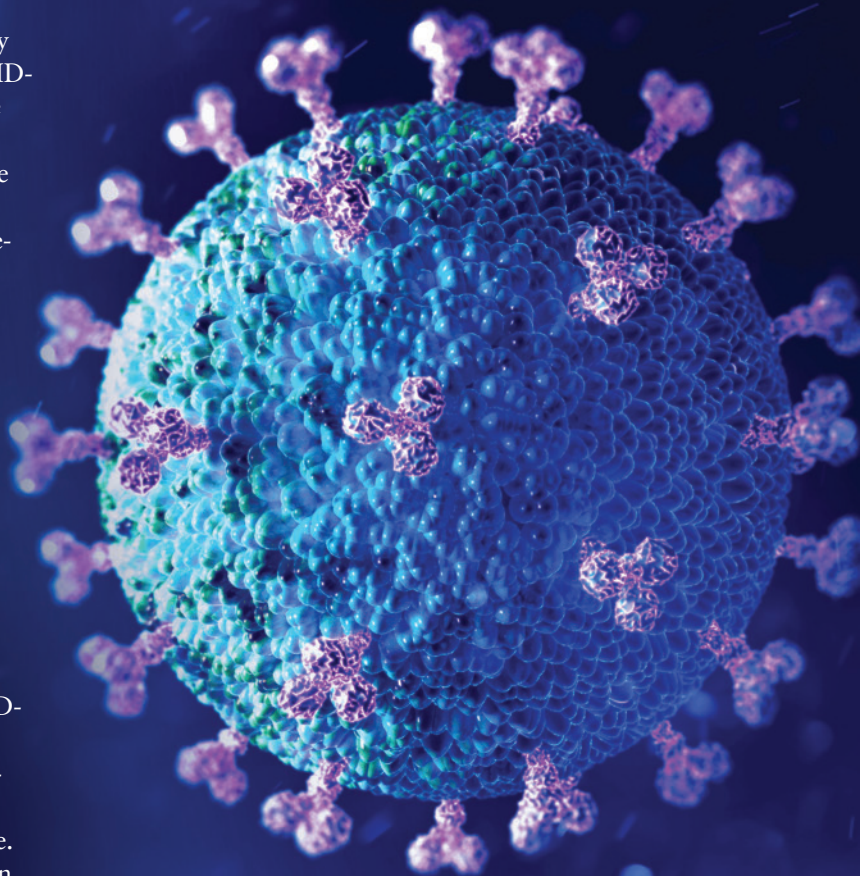
Their work for underserved communities has always been vital, but as the scourge of the coronavirus rages on, their dedication to these communities is now critical.

In early October, more than 211,000 Americans had died from the coronavirus. According to the Color of Coronavirus project by APM Research Lab, the mortality rate of COVID-19 shows wide disparities by race, most dramatically for Black and Indigenous Americans.

Also, the CDC reports that non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native people had an age-adjusted COVID-19 hospitalization rate of 5.3 times that of non-Hispanic White people. COVID-19 hospitalization rates among non-Hispanic Black people and Hispanic or Latino people were both about 4.7 times the rate of non-Hispanic White people.

Working in different divisions of the CDC, these Spelman alumnae are undeterred in their fight against such a deadly disease. They are fearless in their determination to find relief and cures to help their communities. Learn more about who they are and what they do behind the enemy lines of disease.

Renita Mathis is editor of the Spelman Messenger and director of special projects and strategic initiatives in the Office of the President.



WASHINGTON LAWYER LILLIAN S. HARDY TACKLES TOUGH ISSUES

BY TONI CANNADY C'2012

From the global pandemic to the racial justice crisis, the year 2020 has rocked the world. Problem-solvers on the frontlines include scientists, healthcare workers, civil rights leaders and politicians. Attorneys have a large part to play too, and Lillian S. Hardy, C'2003, is a lawyer who people call on when stakes are high.



A partner at the global law firm Hogan Lovells in Washington, D.C., and head of the crisis management practice, Hardy helps her clients stay level-headed and focused during the most trying situations. Her work takes her around the globe, often investigating scandals that put her clients one hashtag away from disaster.

Leading Through Crises

“In a crisis, clients want their lawyer to understand them and to support their leadership as they sort things out,” says Hardy. “I tell people not to hire me if they want someone to bury lies and create cover-ups. I am there to help identify the truths and chart a path forward, before there has been reputational harm.”

This year, Hardy and her team are advising clients as they deal with the avenues in which COVID-19 has upended their organizations. Recent mission-critical work included getting ventilators and telethermographic systems to market under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act and helping a company recover from a COVID-19 outbreak at its premises.

Hardy also has dedicated hundreds of pro bono hours to representing vulnerable communities impacted by the pandemic. For example, she filed a lawsuit against prison officials in Louisiana for failing to protect inmates from contracting coronavirus.

Following on the heels of the pandemic came the slayings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. These and other incidents have prompted scrutiny of the treatment of Black people throughout society and companies are motivated to address systemic racism.

According to Hardy, her most important recent work relates to the racial justice crisis.

“I am grateful to use my influence as a lawyer and adviser on behalf of organizations that are taking part in the antiracism movement,” says Hardy. “They are all starting from different places and have varying goals, but are all willing to invest in changing themselves. I am here for that.”

Hardy believes the ability to create impact and deliver solutions begins with the development of critical leadership skills. She credits her approach to her upbringing and her time at Spelman.

Trailblazer and Mentor

Hardy’s success is impressive given the small number of Black lawyers practicing in elite law firm environments. In 2017, Hardy became a partner at her firm, one of the oldest and largest firms in Washington, D.C. Since then, she continues to lead by example as the head of the firm’s crisis leadership practice and one of the few Black female partners in a white-collar practice at a large global law firm. In July 2020, she was appointed to the Hogan Lovells’ leadership team for the Americas (United States and Latin America) as Lawyer Collaboration & Client Engagement Partner.

Being a first-generation college student and HBCU alum provided valued perspectives, and Hardy has leveraged her point of view in service to dozens of higher education clients, including several HBCUs.

“It is an advantage for us to have as counsel someone like Lillian, who, as an HBCU alumna, has the unique cultural perspective in addition to her other skills,” says Howard University General Counsel Florence Prioleau.

“It has been amazing to have Lillian as a guiding light in this industry,” says Christina Knox, C’2012, an attorney at Squire Patton Boggs in Washington, D.C. “There are not many Black attorneys at large law firms and even fewer Black women. Having Lillian as a resource has been a game-changer.”

Hardy was named a “Rising Star” by *The National Law Journal* and top “40 Under 40” by Global Investigations Review. She also was named a trustee to the alumni board of the University of California, Berkeley School of Law, where she earned her juris doctorate in 2006.

As she takes on new leadership roles, Hardy is mindful of creating opportunities for the next generation.

“If I don’t use my platform to make change and create paths for others, I have wasted my own time and squandered the sacrifice of others who created a space for me,” she says. She is working with the College and other alumnae on initiatives to encourage Spelman graduates to enter the practice of law.

Among the challenges brought by 2020 was the loss of key leaders like U.S. Rep. John Lewis and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg who dedicated their lives to progressive change.

“These losses are a reminder of the importance of supporting a new generation of changemakers, and Spelman women are up for the task of becoming those leaders.”

Toni Cannady is an associate in Hogan Lovells’ Washington, D.C., office and a member of the firm’s Intellectual Property, Media, and Technology practice group.

MEET CHRISTINA EVANS, C'2016, DISEASE PREVENTION RESEARCHER AND COVID-19 EPIDEMIOLOGIST

BY LARRY CALHOUN

When Christina Evans proudly crossed the Spelman graduation stage as a member of the Class of 2016, the psychology major was confident about her future. The very next day she was starting a summer internship at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, then on to graduate school in the fall.

Fast forward four years, and the COVID-19 global pandemic is sweeping across the country, knocking a hole in hearts and lives. Evans, now equipped with a master's degree in public health from Mercer University, rushes to the front line to combat the crisis with thousands of other health professionals.

"COVID-19, in particular, has become the health challenge of our immediate times, and I am proud to play a role in this viral war," she says.

The Stone Mountain, Georgia, native notes that her family's history of careers in the medical field, in both research and practice, gave her exposure to health services.

"Public health was just the perfect place for me," says Evans. "It allows me to help more people and get to the root of ongoing health issues, especially for the underserved."

Currently, Evans wears a couple of professional hats. She is a full-time program manager in the Prevention Research Center at the Morehouse School of Medicine, where she orchestrates community research activities and partnerships. Additionally, on certain nights and weekends, she works at the department investigating, tracking, and analyzing data for COVID-19 cases in individuals and in workplaces.

Evans explains that positive COVID-19 cases are mandated to be reported by law. Cobb & Douglas Public Health workers who test positive are required to isolate for a minimum of 10 days and go 24 hours fever-free without medication before they can report back to work.

"Unfortunately, there are those who are reluctant to participate in contact tracing to find others who might have been exposed to the virus," she says, "and this facilitates the spread even more, especially in minority communities that are vulnerable with pre-existing conditions."

A member of two national honor societies — Psi Chi and Phi Kappa Phi — Evans feels the most rewarding part of her work is being able to connect with the community and those she serves.

"Data are so important, but it is important to understand that there are people behind the statistics," she says. "Since a vaccine timeline is uncertain and will have to include clinical trials, for now, people need to protect themselves using guidelines from



the CDC, including testing, avoiding crowds, social distancing, wearing masks and frequent handwashing."

Evans reflects on the Spelman sisterhood and how it prepared her in immeasurable ways with opportunities. Internships during her matriculation provided unique perspectives. Community service gave her Saturday mornings an unselfish purpose. As a four-year member of the alto one section of the Spelman College Glee Club, she met and sang for President Barack Obama during a performance at the White House. Lastly, Evans is also a member of the Nu Lambda Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., where she can further her sisterhood and be of service to all mankind.

Evans notes that her long-term goal is to create a foundation that will fund numerous public health initiatives, both nationally and internationally.

"I understand that whatever I am passionate about, I can impact at a higher capacity with more resources," she says. "In addition to public health, I also understand the value of entrepreneurship and having financial autonomy to further the cause. With my foundation, I would emphasize minority health, correctional health, and maternal and child health."

Larry Calhoun is a strategic communications consultant, a Morehouse Man and Spelman uncle.

EPIDEMIOLOGIST SONYA E. FRONTIN, C'2007, STANDS ON THE FRONT LINE IN FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

BY ALICIA SANDS LURRY

Sonya Frontin, C'2007, is on a mission to minimize the spread of communicable diseases, especially in communities of color disproportionately affected by health disparities.

An accomplished epidemiologist with a master's in public health and experience responding to Zika and Ebola viruses, measles outbreaks and Hepatitis A and B, Frontin now focuses her attention and response efforts on COVID-19, the disease caused by coronavirus. She is currently a public health quarantine officer/public health adviser with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Global Migration and Quarantine, Quarantine and Border Health and Services Branch at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City.

Since joining the CDC in 2019, Frontin has emerged as a passionate crusader and front-line worker in the fight against COVID-19. As of late October 2020, the virus had claimed the lives of more than 230,000 Americans, many of them people of color.



“As public health quarantine officers, my team and I are on the front line because we’re dealing with the public and the spread of the disease,” says Frontin, whose office screens up to 1,500 to 2,000 passengers traveling daily from China, Amsterdam, London and throughout Europe. “We take our jobs very seriously, and it’s a testament that no one on my team has been ill with coronavirus from potential exposure on the job. I love what I do, and I want to do the best job I can.”

In addition to planning, training and exercising activities for public health emergencies and mass migration planning, Frontin’s pandemic response efforts include assessing ill passengers to determine whether their condition impose a public health concern or risk to plane crew and passengers.

“I come in contact with travelers who are ill and others who’ve traveled throughout the world, and it’s my job to determine whether they can enter the United States,” says Frontin. “I also assess and examine the number of passengers and flights, and then meet those flights at gates arriving in the United States from countries around the world to check for passengers’ temperatures and symptoms.

“If there’s reason for concern, those passengers are isolated, taken to the hospital for testing, and I then work to determine who they traveled with for contact tracing purposes,” she adds. “My office has worked diligently to prevent sick and infectious travelers from traveling and infecting others.”

Frontin is a former infection control and communicable disease epidemiologist who earned her master’s degree in public health from Morehouse School of Medicine.

Aside from her role as a quarantine officer with the CDC, Frontin’s fight against COVID-19 is also personal. The mother of one of her closest Spelman sisters was diagnosed with COVID-19 while undergoing chemotherapy for cancer. Two months ago, Frontin’s stepfather was diagnosed with leukemia and is currently undergoing chemotherapy. Her entire family is especially careful with quarantine at home and with her staying safe at work.

“The Black community throughout this pandemic has also been disproportionately affected by this virus with both infection and mortality rates due to various socioeconomic factors,” says Frontin, who grew up in Trinidad and Tobago before moving to the states at age 16. “The work I do every day is deeply personal for me. I want to keep my family and all families safe. That is the only way we get through this.”

As an African American professional and proud Spelman alumna, Frontin is even more committed to representing, serving, and advocating for underrepresented minority and immigrant communities. She plans to attend medical school to combine her interests in global public health and medicine.

“I constantly am asked how I can continue to work on the front line of this pandemic and why am I not scared of acquiring the virus myself,” Frontin says. “Not only has Spelman provided me with the education to take on any challenge that life has ever thrown my way, but it has instilled within me a deeply grounded moral compass being a woman of service and forever ‘undaunted by the fight’ – even when that fight is with COVID-19.”

Alicia Sands Lurry is a writer, communications and public engagement officer.

KIANTRA BUTLER, C’2003, PROVIDES HEALTHCARE AND LIFE SCIENCES SERVICES IN THE CHEROKEE NATION

BY FRANK MCCOY

Spelman College doesn’t train students. It molds them to be global citizens. Kiantra Butler, who discovered her passion for microbiology at Spelman, is a perfect example.

She is a microbiologist at Cherokee Nation Assurance. It is a U.S. Small Business Administration certified 8(a), tribally owned Small Disadvantaged Business, involved mostly in providing health care and life sciences services.

Butler loved biology’s hands-on lab work and was, she says, “nervous and excited the first time I streaked bacteria on an agar plate.”

As a student researcher at Morehouse School of Medicine, she observed immunological factors related to chlamydial infections. Experiences at both schools are responsible for her foundation of knowledge and love of microbiology and molecular biology.

Spelman, Butler says, pushed her to excel and taught foresight and time management that are now invaluable daily habits.

Butler works at one of the world’s leading public health institutions researching acute flaccid myelitis. AFM is a rare neurological condition occurring mostly in children resulting in the abrupt onset of arm or leg weakness, and loss of muscle tone and reflexes. Case numbers are rising, and there is no cure currently.

In 2019, Butler “jumped at the chance to join CNA.” After four years as a Yale School of Medicine fellow and two years consulting, she praises CNA’s “supportive approach and delivery of the tools we need to successfully do our jobs every day.”

She received her bachelor’s in biology – a chemistry minor – from Spelman in 2003, and her doctorate in biomedical sciences from the Morehouse School of Medicine in 2010.

Spelman also sparked Butler’s global curiosity when she was a student researcher at the University of Ghana Teaching Hospital.

Butler’s geek comes out at night. She loves the evening, and stargazes with husband and kids. “We always watch when the international space station flies over and naturally caught the solar eclipse in 2017,” says Butler, the first and only member of her family to receive a Ph.D.

Her career take-away is increased mindfulness. “I’ve always worked with diseases that disproportionately affect minorities,” she says. I’m more aware of my duty to serve the public and humbled that I am a part of something bigger that can save lives.”



Frank McCoy is executive producer of STEMRules.

Lisa Herring was the kind of student a teacher remembers. “Lisa was the type of student who came for recommendations of books to read or articles to research, or she came into the office to talk politics and talk literature,” says Gloria Wade Gayles, Ph.D., Herring’s English professor and mentor at Spelman College.

Today, Herring, Ed.D., C’94, leads 52,000 students in 87 schools as the new superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools.

She emerged as the sole finalist from a field of 84 candidates after a six-month national search and was installed July 1, 2020.

She arrives after a divided board did not renew the contract of former superintendent Meria Carstarphen, whose six-year tenure began just after APS endured a districtwide test-cheating scandal that led to criminal convictions.

Herring arrived in a new time of crisis — a global pandemic and heightened tensions over racial injustice. Gayles says this former superintendent of Birmingham City Schools is in the right place at the right time.

“She brings a daring and a determination to pursue every single possible way of making a difference,” Gayles says. “You tell her that I told you she can walk on water. And if the land is dry, she has so much passion and power she can bring the water.”

In her inaugural address, Herring spoke of coexisting in a time of two seasons — one, an educational season of hope and renewal “where we will find academic grace,” and the other, a season of fear, frustration, identity, death and sadness, “whether it is the protests or the pandemic.

“Those who are ushering in the change of this season are the children who have been taught well, spoken into well, educated well, loved well,” she says.

Just a few weeks into the job, Herring made the tough decision that school would begin with virtual-only instruction. Spelman alumna Eshé Collins, C’2002, vice chair of the Atlanta Board of Education, calls Herring courageous for not waiting to see what other school systems would do.

“That kind of independence and autonomy and thoughtfulness and intelligence that she’s brought so far has been a proud moment for me with her as my Spelman sister,” Collins says.

School board chair Jason Esteves says he is “extremely optimistic” about Herring’s potential in Atlanta.

“We had a great prior superintendent who really focused on turning around and transforming the way APS operated, restoring trust,” he says. “But at this point, as our organization is operating better, we then have to refocus on our core service, which is public education.

“[Dr. Herring’s] ultimate mission while she’s here — for hopefully the next 20 or 30 years — is to really shore up our academic piece of the organization and ensure that every child has access to quality instruction,” he says. “She’s someone who focuses on the whole child.”

Herring says she feels the weight of that responsibility.

“What I’ve said to myself is that it is critically important that I stay grounded; I stay focused on the work.” Staying grounded also means that, “I’m still Lisa,” she says.

She is mom to one child, her Spelman alumna daughter Imani Herring, C’2019. She is a Christian, deeply grounded in her faith. And, “I’m single,” she says. “I have not been married.”

She says she and her single friends joke that maybe God ran out of husbands and forgot to tell them. But, she adds, “I’m optimistic and hopeful.”

Herring grew up with three brothers, her parents, and a love for learning in Macon, Georgia. “In school, I had great teachers. I felt that they were invested in me,” she says.

Her elders consistently stressed education. One of them, her mother’s father, was an intelligent man who was a sharecropper and great orator who enjoyed sharing family stories. He was also illiterate.

“We knew that Grandpa couldn’t read. He didn’t hide that from us. He used that for us as a reason to make certain that we valued education,” Herring says. “His wife, my grandmother, was very literate and was the person who wrote me the most letters that I got when I was at Spelman, on the most beautiful stationery.”

Already impressed by the spirit of empowerment she’d seen in Spelman women, the College shot to the top of her list after an overnight stay there.

“When I visited Spelman, I found something that had been missing in my life as it related to knowing more about my Black history and as it related to me being a female,” she says.

Her campus host was Inger “Nicole” Dawson, C’93, a friend who’d lived across the street from her in Macon. Dawson, now an instructional support specialist in Georgia’s DeKalb County School District, says Herring has been about helping others since childhood.

“She’s always had a faith-based foundation and just that spirit of giving,” Dawson says.

Herring enrolled at Spelman as an English major with plans to become a lawyer. In her sophomore year, she became a learning center volunteer and, before long, an employee at the Warren Boys & Girls Club of Atlanta.



Left to right: District 2 Board Member Aretta L. Baldon, District 1 Board Member Leslie Grant, Board Vice Chair Eshe P. Collins, Board Chair Jason F. Esteves, District 3 Board Member Michelle D. Olympiadis, District 5 Board Member Erika Y. Mitchell, At-Large Seat 8 Board Member Cynthia Briscoe Brown; and seated is Superintendent Lisa Herring

The club was led then and to this day by Spelman alumna Gail Johnson, C'80, who says Herring arrived at a time when the club served about 275 children from an area that included six public housing complexes.

“That’s when they were talking about disbanding public housing, and there was the crack epidemic and the kids were seeing a lot of violence,” Johnson recalls. “The kids knew genuinely that Miss Lisa cared about them. She always encouraged them to give their best and never quit, and they gave her 100% of what she asked for. She just doesn’t know the profound effect she had on their lives. I cried when they said she was a finalist for Atlanta Public Schools.”

Her work at Warren led Herring to add education classes to her course selection, thinking she might teach briefly before law school.

In her senior year, she was hired to teach at an affluent private school in Pittsburgh. She was so struck by the disparities she saw between children there and those she’d worked with in Atlanta that she abandoned her law aspirations.

Both her grandmothers had predicted her life’s work would be with children. They were right.

“When I visited Spelman, I found something that had been missing in my life as it related to knowing more about my Black history and as it related to me being a female.”

—Lisa Herring

Instead of pursuing a law degree, Herring went on to earn an educational specialist and a master’s in education in school counseling from the University of South Carolina, a doctorate in education administration from Georgia Southern University, and an educational leadership certificate from the University of Georgia.

She has worked in school systems across the Southeast, including Georgia’s DeKalb and Bibb counties; Charleston County, South Carolina; and Jefferson County, Kentucky. Birmingham City Schools was on probationary status when she arrived there three years ago. Under her leadership, the system achieved full district accreditation.

Atlanta school board member Erika Y. Mitchell says she is thrilled to have Herring at APS.

“I have been impressed with her passion for the work, particularly in advocating for the needs of underserved students,” says Mitchell. “Dr. Herring has her work cut out for her and the added challenge of leading the district through a pandemic and revenue shortfalls, but I am optimistic that she will rise to the occasion.”

Donna Williams Lewis, C’79, is a freelance journalist who previously worked for 30 years as a reporter and editor at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Spelman-Trained Educators Stand on the Foundation of Service Leadership

COMPILED BY RENITA MATHIS

As the nation's oldest and most renowned historically Black college for women, Spelman College's fundamental foundation is to educate women and develop educators. From elementary to higher education, Spelman has cultivated education leaders who serve the world. In the introduction of the College's 100th anniversary book, *Spelman: a centennial celebration 1881-1981*, Beverly Guy-Sheftall references a journalist's "assertion" made during the College's 50th anniversary: "No history of women's education in America would be complete without the story of Spelman."

Make no mistake, Spelman is a liberal arts authority on educating and preparing women to become educators. On these pages are some astounding Spelman women who make it their job to educate the minds of others. Subsequent pages feature more of the College's top alumnae throughout the education spectrum.

Of course, we could not feature the thousands of superstar alumnae in the profession, so we want to provide an opportunity for them to be featured on the website. If you are an alumna who makes a living in the education of others – from policymaking to preschool education – let us know who you are. To add your name, visit www.spelman.edu/womenineducation.



Kathaleena Edward Monds, Ph.D., C'86, is professor of management information systems and founding director of the Albany State University Center for Educational Opportunity. The center's mission is to advance educational research in fragile communities from the bottom up.

A Detroit native and lifetime member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., Monds is recognized for her contributions to teaching and leadership. She holds a Ph.D. in instructional technology and a master's in computer science from Wayne State University; a master's in economics and entrepreneurship for educators from the University of Delaware; and a bachelor's in computer science from Spelman.

She is a first-generation college graduate and mother of Halima Kathaleena Monds, C'2020; Akintunde G. Monds and Cazembe S. Monds, both from the Morehouse Class of 2019; and 14-year-old son Malik R. Monds. She is married to, John H. Monds, Morehouse Class of '87.



Valerie Camille Jones, Ed.D., C'2000, was recently honored with the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, which is America's highest honor in math and science for teachers. In fall 2015, she also was recognized by Congressman John Lewis at the 114th Congress 1st Session.

She earned her bachelor's degree in mathematics from Spelman and continued her studies by earning master's and doctoral degrees in mathematics education from Georgia State University and Columbia University, respectively. Jones is nationally board-certified and also a certified industry Studio Teacher.

Jones is respected for her creative approach in making the most difficult subjects accessible and tangible to her students through her effective use of mathematical models as communication tools. She is a champion of promoting math esteem in general. Currently, she teaches at the Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta.





Brittany K. Kemp, Ed.S., CCC-SLP, C'2007, is a nationally certified and state-licensed speech-language pathologist. She is an Atlanta native whose passion to serve others began at an early age when she began attending therapy sessions with her father, who suffered a mini stroke. She was able to observe and witness his speech intelligibility vastly improve. Through this experience, she discovered the values of patience, determination and dedication.

After graduating from Spelman with a degree in child development, Kemp earned her master's degree in communication sciences and disorders (speech-language pathology) in 2014 from the University of West Georgia in Carrollton, Georgia, and her education specialist degree in special education with a concentration in speech-language pathology from Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia.

Her current focus remains on pediatric and school-age populations. Currently, she is the founder and owner of Babbling Bunch Speech Therapy, a venture that addresses the special-needs population in the Atlanta metropolitan area.



Andrea Lewis, Ph.D., C'96, earned a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a doctorate from Georgia State University after graduating summa cum laude from Spelman.

Her professional experiences include elementary school teacher, public and private school administrator and college faculty. As associate professor and chair of the Department of Education at Spelman, Lewis' efforts revolve around her passion for preparing future educators. She organized Spelman's first faculty-led trip to Havana, Cuba, in December 2015 to examine the intersection of history, economics and politics on the country's education system. Subsequent trips were sponsored in 2016, 2018 and 2019.

Lewis has written book chapters and articles in various books and journals centered on teacher education. She also is the author of three books: *Valerie's New Friends*; *Unsung Legacies of Educators and Events in African American Education* (co-authored); and *Preservice Teachers, Social Class, and Race in Urban Schools: Experiences and Strategies for Teacher Preparation*.



Victoria Seals, Ed.D., C'91, is the sixth president of Atlanta Technical College. She previously held several leadership roles at Gwinnett Technical College, including vice president for academic affairs.

Seals began her teaching career in Athens, Georgia. She was employed by Athens-Clarke County Public Schools for two years and Athens Technical College for six years. During her time in Athens, Seals also served as an assistant basketball coach for the Clarke Central High School girls' basketball program and as a tutor/proctor for The University of Georgia Athletic Department.

The Association of Community College Trustees recognized Seals as the 2020 Chief Executive Officer of the Year for the Southern Region. In 2017, she was named Educator of the Year by the South Fulton Chamber; recognized by Year Up Atlanta with the Urban Empowerment Award; and honored by the Urban League of Greater Atlanta at its 56th Equal Opportunity Day.

She received a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Spelman; a master's in mathematics from the University of Georgia, where she also received an educational specialist degree in mathematics education and an Ed.D. in educational leadership.



Nicole Taylor, Ph.D., C'2004, is an associate professor at Spelman College in the education department. She earned her doctorate from Georgia State University in educational psychology with a concentration in language and literacy.

Combining her expertise in education and psychology, Taylor's research and practice focus have been on the engagement of culturally diverse families in their children's reading development and the cultivation of literacy partnerships between culturally diverse families and teachers. She has had the privilege of working with local schools and nonprofits to conduct research and implement family literacy programming and workshops.

Taylor is the author and co-author of several articles and a book, including: *Unsung legacies of educators and events in African American education* (2019); "Developing an understanding of diverse families through family knowledge: Considerations for teacher candidates" (2018); "Promoting family literacy through connections, context, and curriculum" (2017); and "Exploring the literacy beliefs of refugee mothers: Implications for research and practice" (2016).



Celeste Watkins-Hayes, Ph.D., C'96, is a professor of sociology and African American studies at Northwestern University. She is an author and educator widely credited for her research on public policies and governmental agencies targeting low-income families, including with her current role as principal investigator of the Health, Hardship, and Renewal Study on the social and economic consequences of HIV/AIDS for Chicago-area women of diverse racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Her research focuses on urban poverty; social policy; HIV/AIDS; nonprofit and government organizations; and race, class and gender.

Recently, the University of Michigan Regents approved her appointment as the Jean E. Fairfax Collegiate Professor of Public Policy. In 2009, she received a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Investigator Award and a National Science Foundation Early Career Award to conduct this research.

She holds a Ph.D. and master's in sociology from Harvard University and a bachelor's degree from Spelman, where she graduated summa cum laude.



Nikki Youngblood Giles, Ed.D., C'2000, is vice dean for campus life and was previously dean for Beyond Barnard, Barnard College's newest initiative supporting students and alumnae as they define, pursue and achieve success in their careers and communities. Giles' career focus is on student development, advising and program development — especially for students under-represented in higher education. She was the lead for the college's opportunity programs for a number of years and before that served as director of student programming for the Council for Opportunity in Education, the advocacy group supporting federal TRIO programs in Washington, D.C.

A child development graduate from Spelman, Giles earned her master's degree at Teachers College of Columbia University, and most recently earned her doctorate in higher education administration from Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development at New York University. Her qualitative research examined the resiliency behaviors of first-generation college students and their positive impact on their persistence toward college completion.

She resides in Harlem, New York, with her husband and two children.



Educators List



Teri A. McMurtry-Chubb, J.D., C'95, is a professor of law at Mercer University Law School, and currently on leave at the University of Illinois Chicago John Marshall Law School as a visiting distinguished professor of law. McMurtry-Chubb researches, teaches, and writes in the areas of critical rhetoric, discourse and genre analysis and legal history. In 2018, she began a two-year appointment as a civil rights analyst for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

With the publication of *Legal Writing in the Disciplines: A Guide to Legal Writing Mastery* (Carolina Academic Press 2012), McMurtry-Chubb became the first woman of color to author a standalone legal writing textbook for law students. McMurtry-Chubb has used her writing skills for advocacy, including as a co-author of the woman law professor letter opposing the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. A prolific writer, she also authored the rewritten Supreme Court opinion for *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) in *Feminist Judgments: Rewritten Opinions of the United States Supreme Court* (Cambridge University Press 2016). In 2019, she received the 2018 Teresa Godwin Phelps Award for Scholarship in Legal Communication for her article *The Rhetoric of Race, Redemption, and Will Contests: Inheritance As Reparations in John Grisham's Sycamore Row*, 48 *Univ. Memphis L. Rev.* 890 (2018).

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Sharon Owens, C'76, Retires After a Decade of Building Connections, Preserving Spelman's Legacy

BY KIA SMITH, C'2004

Sharon Owens, C'76, understands the important role alumnae play in making Spelman College who she is. It began when she was a child in Birmingham, Alabama.

"I grew up in a neighborhood where there were a lot of Spelman and Morehouse graduates. My brother was already at Morehouse, so I could see from my neighborhood the kind of women and men that came out of the Atlanta University Center, and I wanted to be a part of that excellence."

As an economics major at Spelman, Owens embraced everything the College offered and laid the foundation for a successful career in airline sales and marketing. She was the first female African American district sales manager at Eastern Airlines and was a district sales and marketing manager at United Airlines' second largest hub.

"I did great things to help major corporations make a lot of money," she says. "So when the opportunity to return to Spelman was offered, I was ecstatic about coming back to give back to the institution that had given so much to me. I was excited to help Spelman grow and prosper."

In late 2009, Owens was named Spelman's director of Alumnae Affairs, now Alumnae Engagement. She implemented innovative programs to ensure alumnae stayed engaged with the College and had opportunities to connect with students. After a decade of leading and reinventing the department, Owens is retiring from Spelman. In that relative short time, she has accumulated a long and impressive list of achievements.

During her tenure, alumnae giving rate increased from 28 percent to 41 percent. Homecoming attendance tripled, and Reunion registration consistently maxed out.

"Having new programming motivated sisters to want to be involved and definitely improved our overall engagement," says Owens.

Upon her arrival, Alumnae Affairs had four core programs: New Student Orientation, Reunion, Homecoming and Founders Day. Under her leadership, nine new programs were created to strengthen the connection between alumnae and students.

"When I was a student, alumnae were always engaged with students, but when I returned there were limited opportunities for connections," she says. "I believe students are our best saleswomen and our best ambassadors."

Owens launched programs like Sister2Sister Professional Mentoring, Spelman's annual trip to Capitol Hill, Alumnae-Student Cultural Excursions and others that engage students with alumnae throughout the country. These connections give alumnae the opportunity to pour into students and give them access to highly accomplished alumnae.



Owens also ensured that engagement components were added to Homecoming (professional summits) and Founders Day (alumnae celebration), so students would have the opportunity to see alumnae in action, giving their time, talents and treasures to their beloved alma mater.

"You don't know how to be an effective alumna just by graduating. You learn how to be an alumna because you have witnessed and understood the responsibilities of being one," she explains.

"It was so fascinating to work with our students and our alumnae," she continues. "They are both amazing. Just to see our students come in as freshmen and witness their growth and development as they leave the gates of Spelman, and to see what they have accomplished as they return for Reunion is incredible. Connecting with my dynamic Spelman sisters all over the world was truly my pleasure. I was blessed to have the best job on campus because it gave me the opportunity to engage with diverse students and alumnae worldwide."

As Owens prepares for the next chapter of her life, one thing that won't change is her commitment and connection to Spelman College.

"We are all fortunate to have inherited this extraordinary legacy to preserve," she says. "As Spelman daughters, we must ensure that she stays financially sound, academically strong, the leading institution for educating women of African American descent, and that these values are embraced by future generations of Spelman women."

Kia Smith is an Atlanta-based writer, communications consultant and cultural critic. When she's not writing or tweeting, she enjoys live music and beach vacations. You can find her at kiaspeaksalso.com.

Legacy Project Connects Golden Girls and Graduating Class in Tribute to the Spelman Spirit

BY VICKIE G. HAMPTON

It was supposed to be a very good year.

The Class of 1970, celebrating its 50th anniversary, would have their time in the sun as Golden Girls. And the women of the graduating Class of 2020 would leave the hallowed grounds of Spelman College in a year whose name portended vision and clarity.

Then, COVID-19 struck, and best-laid plans became blurry then altogether disintegrated. Reunion, cancelled. Graduation, cancelled.

But, what wasn't cancelled: the Spelman spirit.

That irrepressible spirit moved Jacqueline Jones Royster, C'70, to ensure that the long-awaited, highly anticipated milestones not go unheralded — even in the midst of a global pandemic.

“We declare, in the face of whatever trials and disappointments we may currently have, that, first, we claim the right to take a breath and to mourn — for a minute,” she wrote in a letter to her class. “Then, we raise our spirits, deliberately, by remembering the steadfast values that we hold in our hearts, heads, and backbones as we recommit ourselves to sustaining our choice to change the world — for the better.”

Royster, along with videographer Shaleisa Brewer, C'2012, had just two weeks to come up with a worthy project to replace the once-in-a-lifetime occasions the two classes would miss. Their result was the Legacy Project, a videotaped oral history of interviews between five members each of the two classes.

Participants from the Class of 1970 included Mary Mangham Jessie, Shirley Campbell Kilgore, Ollie Irons Manley,

Theresa North Rogers, and Harriette Debro Watkins. They engaged in conversations with Ashley Horton, April Lewis, Tangela Mitchell, Nia Page and LaKayla Thompson, all from the Class of 2020.

The project featured five conversations in teams — one person from the Golden Girls and one person from the 2020 graduating class sharing experiences, thoughts and ideas with each other.

The conversations were videotaped, creating a 45-minute video showcasing the endurance of the Spelman spirit.

“My goal was to present the video by graduation and reunion weekend in tribute to the Golden Girls moment my class would not have the privilege of celebrating,” she says. “My view is that this year, with all of the atypical issues that surround us, digital tools enabled us not to let the specificity of this moment during the originally designated time and space pass un-celebrated.”

The video, as well as five 12- to 15-minute shorter videos of each individual conversation, was presented to the Spelman Archives.

As a second phase of the project, Royster hopes to connect local members of the Golden Girls class to the incoming Class of 2024 and videotape another round of conversations between all three classes.

“I anticipate that the final event would be a reception for the three groups at which we showcase the two videotapes and offer a pleasant moment of connection across generations. Whether the full project can be completed is yet to be seen,” she says.

“What we know is that whatever the paths ahead, we have the will, the strength and the talent to move forward, as well as the tenacity and the resilience to do so with substance, with style and with hard work.”

To view the video, visit: <https://vimeo.com/418086128/568fbb287c>

Vickie Hampton is a full-time editorial consultant specializing in editing, writing and publication management from concept to delivery.



“WHAT WE KNOW IS THAT WHATEVER THE PATHS AHEAD, WE HAVE THE WILL, THE STRENGTH AND THE TALENT TO MOVE FORWARD...”

— JACQUELINE JONES ROYSTER, C'70



Dovey Johnson Roundtree, C'38, will have a 40-page children's book published posthumously. The book, ***We Wait for the Sun*** (Roaring Brook Press, January 5, 2021) is co-authored by award-winning author, Katie McCabe. An unsung national hero, Roundtree was instrumental in winning a spate of advances for Blacks and women, and blazing trails in the military, the legal profession and the ministry.

Roundtree, who died in May 2018 at the age of 104, centers the uplifting, non-fiction story on another unsung hero who was profoundly influential in her life: her grandmother, Rachel Graham. Born not long after the Civil War ended, Graham had weathered the death of her first husband at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan. She lived with feet so badly crippled that she was in constant pain. When she was a teenager, she had thwarted a White man's attempts to rape her by running. Enraged, he stomped her feet, shattering them, to ensure she would never run again.

As a child, Roundtree recalled huddling beneath her grandmother's kitchen table with her mother and sisters as Klansmen raged through their community on horseback. Her grandmother stood guard on the front porch, wielding her household broom as the hooded riders thundered by.

Roundtree and McCabe — whose article on yet another unsung hero, Black medical legend Vivien Thomas, was the basis for the HBO film, "Something the Lord Made," winner of three Emmys and a 2005 Peabody award — also collaborated in writing Roundtree's memoir, *Justice Older Than the Law*.

"As a woman, and as a woman of color in an age when Black lawyers had to leave the courthouse to use the bathrooms, she dared to practice before the bar of justice and was unflinching," stated McCabe in an obituary for Roundtree appearing in *The New York Times*, May 21, 2018.

In 1942, as an inaugural member of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (later the Women's Army Corps), she became one of the first women of any race to be commissioned an Army officer. Attaining the rank of captain, she personally recruited scores of African American women for wartime Army service.

As a Washington, D.C., lawyer, she helped secure a landmark ban on racial segregation in interstate bus travel in a case that originated in 1952 — three years before Rosa Parks refused to yield her seat in Montgomery, Alabama.

As a cleric, Roundtree was one of the first women to be ordained a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.



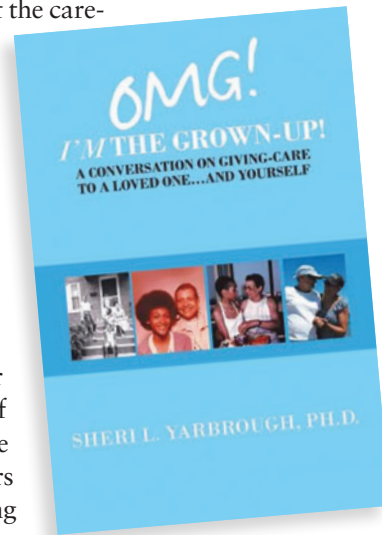
Crystal A. Maxwell, C'2003, has teamed with a group of nine other female doctors to co-write ***The Chronicles of Women in White Coats 2*** (A. Robins Nest, LLC, 2020). The book provides an up-close and personal view of what it's like to be a female doctor in America. The women share their stories of struggle and success — from practicing medicine on the front lines, to grappling with issues of gender inequity and racial bias, to balancing the finessed act of being a doctor, wife, mother, sister and friend all rolled into one.

Maxwell joined Sandhills Medical Foundation at its Jefferson, South Carolina, location as a family physician and has since been promoted to medical director. She is responsible for the clinical management of all seven Sandhills Medical Foundation locations. She also has served as the clinical representative to the South Carolina Primary Health Care Association Board of Directors since 2018. She serves as a healthcare ministry coordinator, providing motivational speaking and health education using the theme "How's your LIGHT (Living In God's Holy Temple)?" as part of her independent company, Crystal A. Smith Maxwell, M.D., LLC.



Bridgett M. Davis, C'82, has penned a moving homage to her mother in *The World According to Fannie Davis: My Mother's Life in the Detroit Numbers* (Little, Brown and Company, January 2019). The story, set in 1960s and 1970s Detroit, is both suspenseful and unforgettable as Davis finally defies her mother's edict not to "run her mouth" and divulges the family's carefully guarded secret about her mother's 34-year run of an illicit enterprise. Writes Davis in the prologue: "The fact that Mama gave us an unapologetically good life by taking others' bets on three-digit numbers, collecting their money when they didn't win, paying their hit when they did, and profiting from the difference, is the secret I've carried with me throughout my life. I've come to see it as her triumphant Great Migration tale: Fannie Davis left Jim Crow Nashville for Detroit in the mid-fifties with an ailing husband and three small children, and figured out how to 'make a way out of no way' by building a thriving lottery business that gave her a shot at the American dream. Her ingenuity and talent and dogged pursuit of happiness made possible our beautiful home, brimming refrigerator, and quality education."

Sheri L. Yarbrough Ph.D., C'83, is the author of *OMG! I'm the Grown-up: A Conversation on Giving-Care to a Loved One... and Yourself* (Balboa Press, July 31, 2020). Yarbrough presents the Praxis for Care, a strategy she devised that offers a practical, easily applied approach that balances the care that recipients require with those of the caregiver. She likens giving-care to riding a teeter-totter where the needs of both persons go up and down based on the circumstances at hand. The book guides readers through the Praxis for Care using thinking points, self-reflection and journal exercises to build customized care journeys. For nearly a decade, Yarbrough has cared for her mother who has dementia of the Alzheimer's type. Experience taught her how easily caregivers forget themselves while meeting a loved one's care needs. "Along the way, I've learned an invaluable life lesson: care-giving is what you do for your loved one; giving-care is what you do for both of you," Yarbrough wrote on her Facebook page. Her strategy was born from her need to address the issue of caring for her mother while adapting their relationship to meet the changes dementia was bringing. Her experience gave her an opportunity to use her skills both as an ethnographer and policy analyst to create a service that could be used by other caregivers with similar experiences. "My approach enables care-givers to put the past behind them in order to cope with what they are experiencing to make the most effective decisions moving forward," she says.



Shawnee Daniels-Sykes, C'83, Melds Her Faith and Career

BY TOM KERTSCHER

Shawnee Daniels-Sykes, C'83, remembers how much she stood out as one of the few African Americans in the private schools she attended in Milwaukee. And how equally daunting it was when the script flipped and, for the first time in her life, she was surrounded by people of her own race at Spelman College.

"My parents wanted me to be educated by some of the best and brightest African American minds," says Daniels-Sykes, who is the first person in her family to attend college.

However, that didn't prepare her for Atlanta, the Black mecca of the South.

"The reality was, when I got there, it was like, Mom, there are too many Black women here! Part of it was culture shock," she says. "Part of it was amazement that there was such brilliance in the Black community."

It wasn't long before the biochemistry major settled in at Spelman, challenged but also inspired by the other talented Black women around her.

"I wasn't quite sure where God was going to lead me, but it was medicine," she said.

It would be many years, however, before Daniels-Sykes found her true calling. A registered nurse by trade, she is now a professor of theological ethics at Mount Mary University in Milwaukee. She started her career as a nurse in inner-city hospitals and neighborhoods in her hometown. She lasted only three-and-a-half years.

"What really turned my stomach was the ethical issues that I kept encountering in health care," a foreshadowing of her later work, she recalls. "That was not where I was supposed to stay."

She remembers the single mother in labor alone while hospital staff members laughed and joked at the foot of

her bed. "The baby fell into a bucket," Daniels-Sykes says. When Daniels-Sykes objected to treatment that she believed contradicted protocol for the patient, she was told to follow orders, not question them.

"It was like I was the person at fault. I had never been taught to just follow authority blindly," she says.

Later, there was the son of a drug-abusing mom who needed organ transplants, but, in Daniels-Sykes' view, didn't get them because people in charge feared he wouldn't receive proper care and supervision from his mother.

Now, as the only Black Catholic female health care ethicist in the United States, Daniels-Sykes is in a position to weigh in on ethical matters.

Over the years, Daniels-Sykes worked for the Catholic archdiocese and the School Sisters of Notre Dame, both in Milwaukee. She speaks out on issues important to Catholics, such as the disproportionate number of African American women having abortions — and the selling of fetal tissues from abortions.

"There's big money in this field," she says.

"When you have those holy and sacred conversations and you help to facilitate creative thinking around life issues, it is satisfying."

Milwaukee journalist Tom Kertscher was a 35-year newspaper reporter, finishing that career at the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Now a freelance writer, his work includes fact-check reporting for PolitiFact and sports reporting for the Associated Press. His reporting on Steven Avery was featured in "Making a Murderer." Kertscher is the author of sports books on Brett Favre and Al McGuire. Follow him at TomKertscher.com and on Twitter: @KertscherNews and @KertscherSports.



AS THE ONLY BLACK CATHOLIC FEMALE HEALTH CARE ETHICIST IN THE UNITED STATES, DANIELS-SYKES IS IN A POSITION TO WEIGH IN ON ETHICAL MATTERS.

1968

Savannah Potter-Miller

Professional: Elected as a delegate-at-large to the American Bar Association House of Delegates in August 2020.

1979

Mayela Allen

Professional: Named executive of the American Cancer Society in Georgia.

1981

Andrea Birch

Professional: Awarded the degree of fellow of the American College of Radiologists.

1998

Adia Harvey Wingfield

Professional: Installed as the Mary Tileston Hemenway Professor in Arts & Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis.

2006

Crystal Upperman, Ph.D.

Professional: Joined Aclima, which maps global air pollution and greenhouse gases at human scale. She is advancing environmental intelligence for public and planetary health as a scientist at the company. She also recently joined the advisory board for the Center for Climate, Health and Equity of APHA (American Public Health Association).

2007

Janina M. Jeff, Ph.D.

Professional: Awarded the 2020 Advocacy Award from American Society of Human Genetics, the largest professional genetics organization.

2013

Courtney Payne

Education: Entering the Boonshoft School of Medicine at Wright State University.

2019

Kelly N. Harper

Professional: Recently named manager of external affairs for Marietta City Schools, in Marietta, Georgia. She was also a 2019 National Teacher of the Year Finalist.

2020

Isabelle Saint-Jean

Education: Accepted into ESCP Business School to pursue a master's in management.

Angela Baskerville, C'87, was awarded the 2020 Women in Technology/IoT Award on behalf of *Connected World* magazine.



Tai Beauchamp, C'2000, was recently appointed to the executive team as co-founder and chief brand officer for Brown Girl Jane, the leading CBD brand for women of color.

Teree Caldwell-Johnson, C'78, recently published an article on racial equality in which she talked about the eight minutes and 48 seconds it took Minneapolis police officers to take the life of George Floyd. In the article, she urged readers to use eight minutes and 46 seconds to do good.

Frances Carter-Johnson, Ph.D., C'99, will serve as the featured presenter for a virtual research-focused session sponsored by Spelman's Office of Research, Innovation and Collaboration. As a data scientist in the Human Resources Division of the National Science Foundation's Education and Human Resources Directorate, Carter-Johnson is responsible for broadening participation programs and contributing to the advancement of groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM.



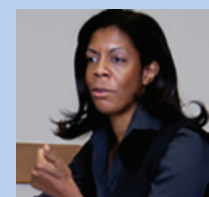
Nzali "ZaZa" Scales, C'2019, was interviewed by *Voyage Atlanta* in July 2020 to discuss her live and private virtual cooking classes offered through her business, ZaZa's Kitchen.

Fallon Wilson, C'2005, was recently featured in *VentureBeat*, a national tech publication, where she passionately expressed her concern over data, AI and tech from companies that have failed to make meaningful progress on diversity and inclusion initiatives. She also announced the launch of the National Black Tech Ecosystem Association. The group's initial community gathering will focus on bringing together people in tech and the Black faith community.

Marian Wright Edelman, C'60, founder and president emerita of the Children's Defense Fund, was honored by the Civil Rights and Social Justice section of the America Bar Association with a 2020 Thurgood Marshall Award.

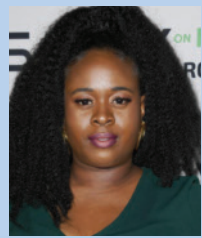
A new office building now being completed at UNC Chapel Hill will be named in honor of the late **Gwendolyn Harrison Smith, C'44**, the first Black woman to attend classes at the university there.

Kiron Skinner, Ph.D., C'81, director and Taube Professor of Carnegie Mellon University's Institute for Politics and Strategy, recently co-authored four articles in *The National Interest*. She also contributed two articles on Russian influence in Belarus, one co-written with Stanford University professor and Hoover Institution Senior Fellow Russell A. Berman and the other with James Jay Carafano of the Heritage Foundation.



take NOTES

Adia Harvey Wingfield, Ph.D., C'97, associate dean for faculty development and professor of sociology at Washington University in St. Louis, penned an editorial in the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Titled, "Systemic racism persists in the sciences," the article questions why racial disparities persist despite safeguards scientists have to keep their work bias-free.



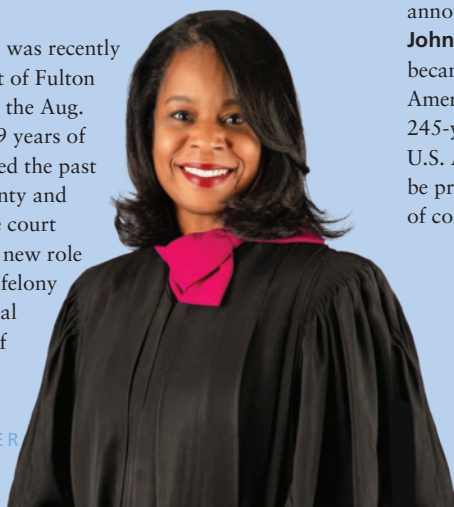
Bria Henderson, C'2015, was recently cast on FX's new series, "Mrs. America" as Black feminist leader, Margaret Sloan. Also, she was interviewed by *Forbes* on feminism and the message behind the series.

Chelsea Fearce, C'2017, has been featured on several news outlets, including *People* magazine, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, BET and The Huffington Post. Despite being homeless throughout her childhood, she graduated valedictorian of her high school class and was awarded a full scholarship to Spelman and, subsequently, Yale School of Medicine.



Alyx Porter, M.D., C'99, is the founder of ElevateMeD, a nonprofit that seeks to diversify medicine. After one year, the organization has raised more than \$200,000 and selected its first cohort of scholars. Ten medical students of underrepresented backgrounds from across the country will each receive \$10,000 annually for medical school.

Melynee Leftridge (Harris), C'88, was recently elected judge on the Superior Court of Fulton County, Atlanta Judicial Circuit, in the Aug. 11, general runoff election. With 29 years of legal experience, Leftridge has served the past 13 years for citizens of Fulton County and the state of Georgia as a magistrate court judge. She will begin serving in her new role Jan. 1, 2021, and will preside over felony criminal cases, matters involving real estate, domestic relations, breach of contract and personal injury.



Ciara Smith, C'2020, was elected to the Anniston, Alabama, City Council to represent the 3rd Ward of her hometown.



Spelman College Board of Trustees voted unanimously to appoint **Carmen D. Harris, C'2002**, as the 2020-2023 alumna trustee. Harris is the co-founder and managing partner of Magnus on Water, a cocktail bar and restaurant in Biddeford, Maine.



Chelsea Jackson Robinson, Ph.D., C'2001, a yoga and meditation instructor, recently announced she is officially a Peloton instructor.



The board also welcomed **Cara J. Hughes, C'2003**, a third-generation Black entrepreneur whose late grandmother, Joan B. Johnson, also served as a Spelman Trustee.



Theodora Lee, J.D., C'84, queen of the Vineyards, was featured in *Forbes* in an article titled "Three Black Wine Experts on Diversity, Representation and Inclusion within the Wine Industry." Lee and the two other experts discussed how the wine industry as a whole has a real chance to serve as a catalyst to promote justice and equality.

On Sept. 2, 2020, *The Christian Recorder* announced news **Monica Johnson-Lawson, C'92**, became the first African American woman in the 245-year history of the U.S. Army Chaplaincy to be promoted to the rank of colonel.

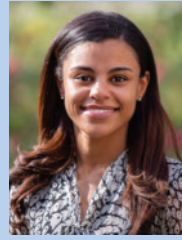


Jerica Richardson, C'2004, was featured on the National Urban League site in the announcement of her SVP appointment to oversee racial and social justice initiatives for the 110-year-old civil rights organization.



Kimani Norrington Sands, C'93, was recently interviewed by **Jamilah Pitts, C'2012**, for an article titled "Black Girls and Mental Health" for Love Your Magic website, which supports girls of color and promotes sisterhood.

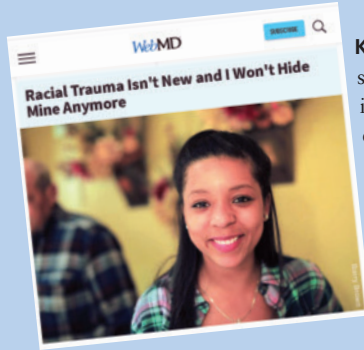
Khyra Kolidakis, C'2017, wrote an essay, "Maternal Mortality and Domestic Violence: The Intersectionality of Pregnancy and Violence," that won first place in an annual writing competition sponsored by the State Bar of Texas Women and the Law Section.



Cynthia Wallace, C'93, recently became a member of the City of Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan Strategic Advisors group.



Somalia Ra-Min, C'2018, was one of two winners of comedian Loni Love's Quarantine Talent Show. Her appearance reached more than 10,000 views on YouTube.



Kamron Taylor, C'2015, spoke during a WebMD interview about several examples of racial trauma growing up in an Ohio suburb and the vital need for her to go to an HBCU — specifically Spelman.



Kelli Peterson, Ed.D., in July, was named assistant superintendent for equity, inclusion and opportunity for the Louisiana Department of Education. She was chief portfolio officer for New Orleans public schools and is a former charter school teacher and principal.

Jessica Rowland Williams, Ph.D., C'2008, wrote an opinion article for *EdSurge* in which she reflected on trailblazer and unsung hero George McLaurin. McLaurin applied to the University of Oklahoma for graduate school but was denied admission until he won a federal case. The article is titled "George McLaurin and the Ongoing Fight Against Systemic Racism in Higher Education."



Crystal Hicks, C'89, was one of 58 educators awarded the 2020 Blue Ribbon Teacher Award for changing lives through their work in student growth, instructional excellence or teacher leadership.



Rozalynn S. Frazier, C'2000, was profiled in a *Forbes* series called Cooking and Coping, where she discussed her spin on a recipe for linguine with braised short ribs in red wine sauce. Cooking, she said, has helped her cope with social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

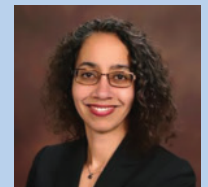


Nakaiya Turk, C'12, started a new role as a marketing communications manager at Comcast.

Khadijah Robinson, J.D., C'2011, launched a platform, March 1, that some are calling the modern-day Green Book for online shopping with Black businesses during COVID-19.



Noted scholar, author, interdisciplinary researcher and innovator **Talitha M. Washington, Ph.D., C'96**, was recently named the director of the Atlanta University Center Consortium Data Science Initiative.



KENNEDY NOELLE PREVAL, C'2023

Died: Sept. 1, 2020

Services: Atlanta Botanical Garden

Affectionately referred to as “Short Stuff,” Kennedy Noelle Preval was born April 29, 2001, in Atlanta, to Erika, C’98, and John Preval and big sister, Alana, C’2021. She was a force of light who led her way toward many exciting discoveries, adventures and lifelong friendships. Kennedy’s love for Girl Scouts, volleyball, travel, culinary delights, and the arts provided many avenues for her to enjoy a vibrant life with her family and friends. A graduate of Chamblee Charter High School in May 2019, Kennedy also earned her Girl Scouts’ Bronze and Silver awards and completed all levels of Girl Scouting through Ambassadors.

In 2010, Kennedy began her club volleyball career and was the captain of the Chamblee Charter High School Bulldogs girls’ volleyball team, where she played the libero position and received numerous awards for her talents and leadership both on and off the court. She loved her teammates, her coaches, and ripping through her opponents. Kennedy lived her life with passion and enjoyed her favorite color, pink and favorite foods — strawberries, plums, crepes, and steak. She was an animal lover and vocal about the inhumane treatment of killer whales. Kennedy also enjoyed favorite movies like “The Dark Knight Rises,” all of the Marvel movies, “Inception,” “Titanic,” “Don’t Tell Mom the Babysitter is Dead,” “The Way Way Back” and “Coraline.” Her favorite music artists, Drake, Beyoncé, Chloe x Halle, daBaby, Frank Ocean, Flo Mill, Lana Del Rey, and Lorde were often heard throughout

the house. Recently, Kennedy began exploring new hobbies — photography and painting.

As a young woman of the world, Kennedy enjoyed eating good food, traveling, writing, contemplating life’s most pressing issues, seeing friends, and driving with the windows down, bopping her head to good music. She was not a fan of seafood, inequality, and losing volleyball matches — particularly against McIntosh High School, where her team lost two years in a row, preventing a state championship.

Kennedy worked hard and fulfilled her dream to follow in her mother and sister’s footsteps toward Spelman College, where she became a Spelman Woman and completed her first year, majoring in psychology.

Kennedy departed this earth suddenly on the morning of Sept. 1, 2020, in Atlanta, and is survived by her parents, John and Erika of Atlanta; sister Alana Renee Preval of Atlanta; paternal grandparents, Therese and Mercurieu Preval; maternal grandparents, Earnest Ford and Virginia Ford Barner; aunt, Victoria Ford; uncles Marc Preval (Falicia) and McDonald Preval (Gekeima).

In lieu of flowers, the family of Kennedy invites you to honor her legacy with a contribution to Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta. Please visit donate.girlscouts-atl.org, select “make a one-time annual fund donation,” and check the “tribute gift” box to make a gift in her memory. Thank you.

— *Obituary of Kennedy Noelle Preval*



in
MEMORIAM

1952

Barbara Ingram Whitaker, Ph.D.
Died: April 16, 2020
Services: April 22, 2020, Murray
Brothers Funeral Home Cascade
Chapel, Atlanta

1954

Constance Scott Jackson
Died: April 10, 2020

Christine Dixon Jones
Died: April 9, 2020

1956

Dorothy Jean High
Died: May 25, 2020
Services: June 5, 2020, William
Toney's Funeral Home Chapel,
Zebulon, North Carolina

Edna Jarrett Pagan
Died: April 5, 2020
Services: April 11, 2020, Elizabeth
Chapel of Alfonso Dawson Mortuary,
Atlanta

Gloria Shropshire Bolds, Ph.D.
Died: April 12, 2020
Services: April 20, 2020, Westview
Cemetery, Atlanta

1957

Ernestine Miles Mann
Died: April 2, 2020
Services: March 29, 2020, Westview
Cemetery, Atlanta

1964

Margie Ann Price Payne
Died: June 4, 2020
Services: June 10, 2020, Chapel of
Donald Trimble Mortuary, Decatur,
Georgia

1966

Clarita Nelson Stone
Died: April 8, 2020
Services: April 17, 2020, Magnolia
Cemetery, Mobile, Alabama

1967

Ruth E. Baety
Died: March 27, 2020

1968

Bertha Vining Montgomery
Died: July 3, 2020
Services: July 10, 2020, Union Springs
Baptist Church Cemetery, Rutledge,
Georgia

1969

Pamela Cheryl Vaughn
Died: June 16, 2020
Services: June 25, 2020, Forest Hills
Cemetery, Chattanooga, Tennessee

1970

Lovonia Favors Bailey
Died: April 13, 2020
Services: April 24, 2020, Lincoln
Cemetery, Atlanta

Sandra Fenner Eaddy
Died: March 9, 2020
Services: March 19, 2020, Woodlawn
Memorial Garden, Norfolk, Virginia

Pearlie Mae Perkins Watkins
Died: Aug. 7, 2020
Services: Aug. 14, 2020, Macon
Memorial Park, Macon, Georgia

1973

Linda Webb Young
Died: Aug. 8, 2020
Services: Aug. 22, 2020, Murray
Brothers Funeral Home Cascade
Chapel, Atlanta

1974

Adoria I. Glass Williams
Died: July 24, 2020
Services: Aug. 1, 2020, Willie Watkins
West End Chapel, Atlanta

1978

Vanessa Walker Hartsfield
Died: April 27, 2020
Services: May 7, 2020, Tri-Cities
Funeral Home, Lithonia, Georgia

1979

Sheila D. Jackson
Died: June 4, 2020
Services: Willie Watkins West End
Chapel, Atlanta

1981

Teresa Lee Momon
Died: Feb. 20, 2020
Services: Feb. 29, 2020, Murray
Brothers Funeral Home Cascade
Chapel, Atlanta

1989

Rostine D. Patterson-Webb
Died: June 6, 2020
Services: June 20, 2020, Mt. Zion
Baptist Church, Kansas City, Kansas

1995

Maia Ferrouillet
Died: Feb. 28, 2020

2008

Laticia A. Appiah
Died: March 12, 2020

2018

Anyea Murray
Died: April 16, 2020



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