



THE BLACKWELL FAMILY CHRONICLE

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A Message from Our President

Dear Family Members,

This is a historic year for America. Many of us never thought it possible to see an African American or a woman seriously considered for the presidency in our lifetime. The images of African Americans and women have been changed for a long time to come. In this year when your vote really counts, please exercise this precious right.

We have an exciting edition of the newsletter for you this time. Beginning with the announcement of the reunion in Baltimore, MD, Dr. Katana L. Hall-Banks is the hostess this year. Cousin Katana and the Baltimore Family ask that everyone reserve hotel rooms as soon as possible with the information provided. *Branch Presidents*: Please get an estimate of reunion workshop attendees to the host committee as soon as possible.

This edition also highlights family members, who are engaging the world in an extraordinary manner. Congratulations to Cousin Alia Jones for her first production opening on Broadway. Our First Vice President, JoAnne Blackwell, shares her journey to entrepreneurship and offers tidbits of advice for others to follow.

Our Second Vice President, Marilyn Underdue, encourages family members to form branches in your local area. She has committed to communicate with Branch Presidents and key persons throughout the year. Her first edition of Branch eNews was transmitted in early May 2008. This edition also provides a synopsis of the tribute to Cousin Thelma Doswell at the last reunion. The family thanks Susan Blackwell-Sapp and her family for the success of that program. Cousin Thelma has recently been hospitalized. She is now recovering in a convalescence home. Please keep her in your prayers. An excerpt of Cousin Lamont Owens' sermon at the Family Worship Service is also provided. Attendance at Sunday worship services is encouraged at future reunions. The weekend is not complete until we meet in worship as a family.

Endeavoring to know our heritage, the series on African Monarchs continues. The heroine selected for this edition was Kohena (Kohanna), the last Queen of Mauritania before the Arab invasions of North Africa. Motivated to celebrate ourselves, we will also include spots on contributions to America in future editions. Similarly, several family members are participating in the Blackwell DNA Project. Cousin Mel Currie offers a way to connect to an original region of the world based on our DNA. Join us in learning more about ourselves.

I also emphasize the Committee formed at the last reunion for preservation of family history. Achieving our goal of blending youth activities with family pride and lessons learned from legendary and accomplished family members, Richard King, III, provided an article on Arthur Ashe and Mel Currie included an article on Ahmad Jamal. Future editions will feature articles about elder family members and challenge our youth to learn more about their parents and grandparents.

Last but not least, Cousin Floryne Spence has asked everyone to review the Constitution and By-Laws with Branch Presidents and your local family members. Be prepared to vote at the reunion.

Enjoy this edition of the Blackwell Family Chronicle.
Sincerely,

Paul Blackwell, Jr.
President, Blackwell Family Association

**save
the
date**

56th Blackwell Family Reunion

"Honor the Past & Celebrate the Future"
Baltimore, MD
October 24-26, 2008

Hilton Garden Inn White Marsh
5015 Campbell Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21236
(410) 427-0600

The festivities will be held at the newly renovated Hilton Garden Inn at White Marsh, Northeast of Baltimore and easily accessed from Interstate 95 (exit 67B).

The Blackwell Family Reunion's Personalized Group Web Page is <http://hiltongardeninn.hilton.com/en/gi/groups/personalized/BWIWMGI-BLAK-20081024/index.jhtml>. Book now online!

Our Special Room Rates are \$129.00 per night with an additional 6% state tax and 8% hotel occupancy tax.

Group Name: BLACKWELL 56TH ANNUAL FAMILY REUNION!

Group Code: BLAK

Group ID: 303540

Check in is after 3:00PM

Check out is 12 noon

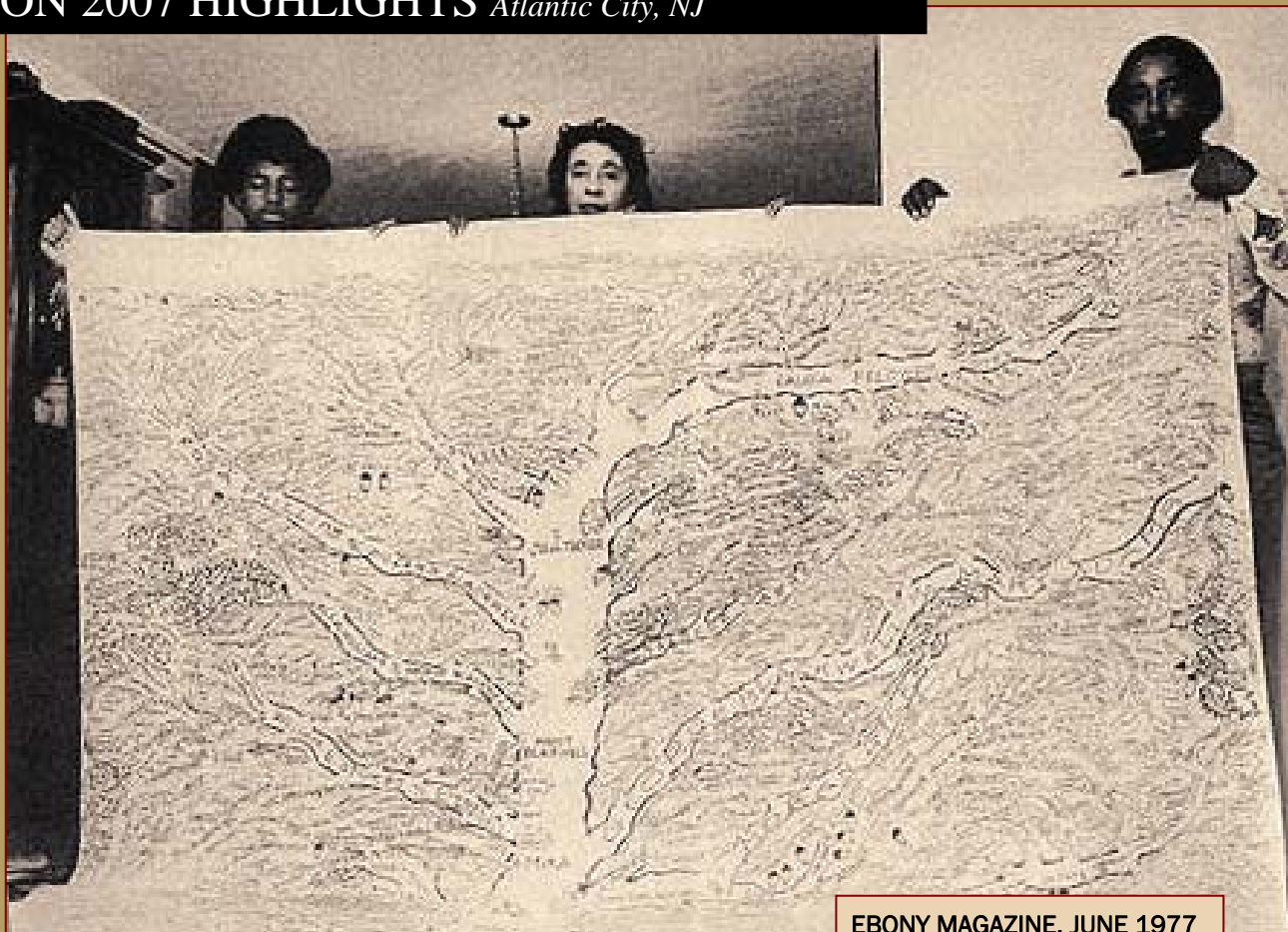
The Executive Board Meeting will be Friday evening followed by the General Meeting. Four free 30-minute educational workshops are planned for Saturday morning including preparing for the future, with legal documents, estates and wills and "dressing for success for less." On Saturday afternoon, an excursion to the Great Blacks in Wax Museum is scheduled! Calling all youth for the new Blackwell Family Talent Showcase!

Love, Joy, Peace and Blessings,
Katana L. Hall Banks
56th Blackwell Family Reunion 2008
Baltimore Committee

Cousin Dorothy Bridgeforth of Baltimore, MD is our new Financial Secretary and Cousin Joyce Bridgeforth of Southfield, MI is our new Recording Secretary. Welcome to our new officers!



REUNION 2007 HIGHLIGHTS *Atlantic City, NJ*



EBONY MAGAZINE, JUNE 1977

Tribute to Thelma Doswell, Blackwell Family Historian

By Paul Blackwell

On the evening of October 27, 2007, the Blackwell Family came together to pay tribute to Lady Thelma Short Doswell. The Masters of Ceremony for the evening were Lawrence Sapp, and Michael and Maurice Hargis. Lady Doswell was celebrated for her long standing position as Blackwell Family Historian and Genealogist. She was also recognized for her contribution to the organization of the Annual Blackwell Family Reunion from its inception and her untiring work year after year for the family as her life's work.

The tribute opened with the African American National Anthem, "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing", as led by Luther Blackwell, Jr. of Bridgeport, CT. Roscoe Thomas, of Hopewell, VA provided the invocation and grace. After dinner, Marilyn Underdue, of Upper Marlboro, MD, presented a biography of Lady Thelma Doswell. Highlights of her biography included the distinction as the first certified woman genealogist of African American descent and her work to document 15 generations of Blackwell Family History that goes back to 1735 in the United States. She documented the names of Blackwell Family members on the largest known ethnic family tree. Lady Doswell was recognized with appearances on television and radio, as well as the print media. She was also hailed at African Embassies, colleges, elementary and high schools, churches, family reunions, fraternal meetings, and cultural and writing workshops.

Individual tributes and presentations from the family were given by Richard Jones, Lula Clark, Sherri Clark, Floryne McLean Spence, Robert L. Blackwell, Charles Jones and Paul Blackwell, Jr. Thelma Thomas, wife of the late past president, Homer Blackwell Thomas, submitted a special tribute which was eloquently read by Alia Jones in honor of Lady Doswell. Representing the family's youth, eleven year old Carter King presented an acrostic that gave meaning to every letter in the name Thelma Short Doswell. [cont.'d]

REUNION 2007 HIGHLIGHTS *Atlantic City, NJ*



Tribute to Thelma Doswell [cont.'d]

Two plaques were presented to Lady Doswell. Plaques were from the Constitution and Bylaws Committee and the Blackwell Family at Large. Family members also presented a large photograph of Lady Doswell sitting on the canvas, which contains the Family Tree. The photograph was signed by over 100 Blackwell Family Members.

An additional tribute was given by Mr. Arthur Harris. He explained how Lady Doswell touched people outside of the Blackwell Family with her work in genealogy.

The Tribute closed with the Blackwell Family song led by Luther Blackwell, Jr.

We are grateful to the Host Committee, led by Susan Blackwell Sapp and her family for making this year's reunion a celebration of Lady Thelma Short Doswell. Special thanks is also appropriate to 1st Vice President, JoAnne Blackwell for assisting the host committee. There is no one more deserving of honor and respect from the entire Blackwell Family.

Unfortunately, the honoree could not attend the reunion after being hospitalized the week before the reunion. However, the entire evening was captured on DVD and presented to her.

Excerpt from Sunday Worship Service Sermon

By Reverend Jerome L. Owens

Sermon: OH MAGNIFY THE LORD



...Who would not serve a God who is able to deliver us from all manner of obstacles placed before us. Who promises to make our enemies our footstool, who...

If you love the Lord - you ought to be able to come together on one accord to worship the God who brought you through another day's journey,
Who clothed you in your right mind,
Who put food on you table and guides your every foot step,
Who somehow makes a way out of no way,
Who shelters you in the time of storm,
Who renders unselfish unmerited grace because of who he is...,
Who in his unsearchable Love saves us from ourselves just as we are without one plea.
Who knows what we stand in need of before the thought is formed in our minds,
Who looks beyond every one of our faults and supplies all of our needs.
Who stands as that rock in a weary land,
Who is able to present us faultless in his presence with exceedingly great joy
Who is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him, if you come in faith and truth.
Who would not serve a God like this...

Psalm 34:1-3 1 Will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. 3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. O magnify the Lord. AMEN

SNAPSHOTS REUNION 2007



To purchase copies of the Reunion 2007 DVD, contact Luther Blackwell, La Family Production Enterprises, 203-345-3258, lapeachproduction@hotmail.com



African Kings and Queens Series: The Soninke and Diah Kohena (Kohanna), Queen of Mauritania

By Paul Blackwell

Our esteemed historian, Lady Thelma Doswell, always reminds us that Amar was the foremost ancestor of the African American Blackwell Family. She explained that Amar was captive temporarily at Goree Island before being taken aboard the Slave Ship Doddington in 1735. This area is known today as Senegal but was the area where old West African Empires existed.

Amar was of the Soninke ethnicity. They were the Mande people, who were acknowledged as founders of the Ghana Empire in 750 AD. However, they called their empire, Wagadou (land of the herd). Two primary families of Soninke ethnicity, the Sisse and Sylla, also appear at the root of the Blackwell Family Tree.

The Soninke were from a great socio-political culture that extends back to 4,000 B.C. in Southeastern Mauritania. The Cordovan Scholar, al Bakri, said that Ghana could field an Army of 200,000 by 1067, when the Almoravids invaded them.

Before talking about the Soninke's reign in West Africa, it is appropriate to highlight one great monarch when they were in Mauritania. Accordingly, the Arab invaders enumerated the Soninke among the Berbers and Moors of Northwest Africa.

Their last Queen in Mauritania was Diah Kohena. She led her people against Arab invaders in the late 7th Century. Before these invasions, people of that area had absorbed Phoenician traders, participated in the Punic Wars against the Greeks, overthrown the Romans and Vandals, and watched the Arabs defeat the Byzantines. Prior to the arrival of the Arabs, the population of Mauritania was a mixture of African Christians and African Jews in religion.



Kohena became the Arab's most stubborn enemy. In 683, Kohena's forces defeated Akbar ibn Nafi. However, the Arabs came back and took Carthage in 698. Although she defeated General Hassan ibn Al Numan, after he took Carthage; this was the beginning of the end for Kohena. After Hassan retreated, she reclaimed Carthage and ruled most of Northwest Africa for a short period.

Kohena knew that the Arabs would return with greater force because of greed for Africa's wealth. Therefore, as her first defense, she ordered her army to turn Northwest Africa into a desert by destroying cities, orchards and sedentary herds. This

cost her dearly because it alienated the residents of the cities.

Hassan finally defeated Kohena in 702. Before she died, she told her sons to submit to the enemy to preserve their lives. Family survival proved to be most important to her in the end. One of her sons deserves greater attention in a later edition.

After Kohena's death, most Soninke migrated south and were given credit for founding the Ghana Empire. Others migrated into Spain and became missing relations between Africans and some Spanish people, which also deserves special attention.

Unfortunately, there are only scant accounts of Kohena in western history. I learned of her during a lecture by Historian, John Henrik Clarke. He referenced a book by J.C. DeGrath Johnson, "African Glory." Afterwards, I read the book and ran the appropriate references. Join the discussion as the series on African monarchs continues.

OUR HERITAGE

Blackwell DNA Project

Over the past 20 months Mel Currie has carried out an extensive DNA survey of his family, including three of his



ancestors who have ties to the Blackwell Family Association. This survey has given a significant boost to the genealogical research that he has pursued over the past two decades. Given that success, he believes that DNA could also provide a significantly deeper understanding of the Blackwell family history, if Association members were to participate in a Blackwell DNA project.

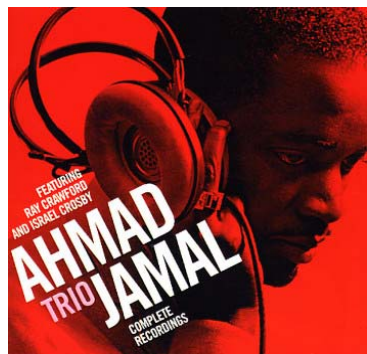
The ins and outs of such a project are too complex to discuss in the framework of this newsletter. However, such questions as: "Are all the men who carry the Blackwell name descendant from a common male ancestor?" would certainly be on the table. If the men are not the descendants of a common Blackwell male, do they form clusters? It would be pretty exciting if we could identify a woman who is a descendant of Amar on a strictly maternal line. If such a woman exists, she could provide clues to Amar's origin through her mitochondrial DNA. There are many other questions that might yield to DNA analysis, such as the extent of European and Native American admixture in the African-American Blackwell family.

Please direct your questions to Mel Currie, who can be reached at: 410-448-1302 or currie19@verizon.net.

NOTABLE FAMILY HEROES

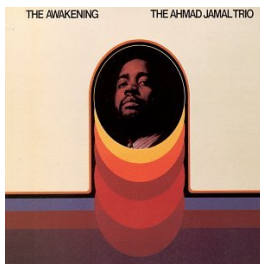
Living Legend of Jazz, Ahmad Jamal

By Melvin Currie

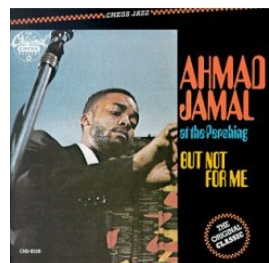


On March 3, 2007, the Kennedy Center honored three dozen iconic figures with the Living Jazz Legend Award. Included among these luminaries was pianist Ahmad Jamal. Ahmad Jamal first came into prominence in the late fifties with his landmark album "Ahmad Jamal at the Pershing", which set a record for length of time on the billboard charts, 108 weeks. On this album was what became his signature piece, "Poinciana". He has made dozens of recordings in his career and has been a major influence on many jazz greats of his time, perhaps most notably Miles Davis. Jazz cognoscenti name him as the man who has done more to influence the evolution of the small jazz ensemble than any other musician. Ahmad Jamal is still touring the world. In 2006 he did three extensive tours in Europe as well as performing in Turkey, Thailand, Brazil, and throughout the United States. His 2007 schedule has been no less demanding. Ahmad Jamal's most recent appearance on the cover of Down Beat Magazine was the May 2003 issue.

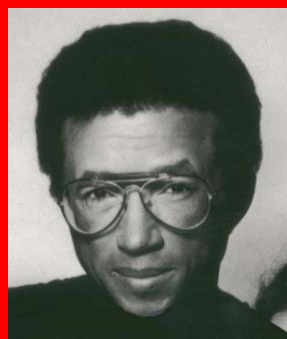
Ahmad Jamal was born in Pittsburgh in 1930, the youngest child of Robert and Lottie (Wilson) Jones. His father Robert Smith Jones was born in Lunenburg County, Virginia the son of James and Bell (Bowser) Jones and the grandson of Stephen and Lucy (Brown) Jones. We leave it to the reader to trace Ahmad Jamal's line back to Amar. Ahmad Jamal is a maternal uncle of Mel Currie, who has of late been active in the Blackwell Family Association.



Mel was forced to accompany his uncle the whole evening of the ceremony and subjected to having dinner at the same table with Dave Brubeck, Billy Taylor, Michel Legrand, Cleo Laine, Al Jarreau, Nancy Wilson and, of course, Uncle Jamal.



Living Jazz Legend Award recipients present for the ceremony and banquet, which was emceed by James Earl Jones before a sellout crowd in the Kennedy Center Concert Hall, were: Toshiko Akiyoshi, David Baker, Louie Bellson, Dave Brubeck, Chick Corea, Donald Byrd, Ornette Coleman, Paquito D'Rivera, Sir John Dankworth, Buddy DeFranco, Frank Foster, Curtis Fuller, Benny Golson, Chico Hamilton, Barry Harris, Jimmy Heath, Jon Hendricks, Freddie Hubbard, Ahmad Jamal, Al Jarreau, Hank Jones, Dame Cleo Laine, Michel Legrand, Abbey Lincoln, Wynton Marsalis, Marian McPartland, James Moody, George Russell, Jimmy Scott, Dr. Billy Taylor, Cecil Taylor, Clark Terry, Frank Wess, Gerald Wilson, Nancy Wilson, Phil Woods.

The Legend,
Arthur Ashe
By Richard King III

Arthur Ashe is a legend today because he impressed everyone with his will to live and his determination to rise above the common athlete. Even though he won three grand slams, that accomplishment was nothing compared to his other accomplishments in life. He was a model to young tennis players, he was a leader in civil rights protests, and he was a leader in AIDS awareness. He made sure that when he was diagnosed with AIDS he didn't see it as a weakness but as a better reason to strive above the common athlete. He certainly achieved that goal.

After being diagnosed with AIDS because he received a contaminated blood transfusion, he fought hard to keep on going. He proceeded to inform others on the pain and hardships of AIDS. More important, he devoted a tremendous amount of time and effort into teaching the next generation how to prevent the disease. He passed the information to kids in the National Junior Tennis League, an organization he helped form.

Plus, not only did he give the information, but also he provided victims the supplies they needed to fight the disease. By raising five million dollars for the war against AIDS, he gave hope that one day we could possibly find a cure or at least come closer to it.

Arthur Ashe lived his life showing that you should never give up just because your weaknesses seem overwhelming. You should never let your weaknesses slow you down. You should, instead, rise above your weaknesses and triumph over them.

Personally, Arthur Ashe taught me to always voice my ideas and fight for what I believe in. He showed me this by fighting against apartheid and standing up for what he believed in. He was a symbol of living a life of strong belief. He was never an average athlete or an average man.

A Passion for Fashion Entrepreneur JoAnne Blackwell

After years of a professional career, I finally realized that I wanted to work for myself, so I took an early retirement in 2005. I am now living a life I never dreamed possible as an entrepreneur in the fashion world.

My idea of a women's boutique came about because I love fashion. After researching retail marketing, I settled on opening a consignment boutique mainly because, not only am I a fashion fanatic, but I had three closets filled to the brim with clothes, shoes, and handbags that I would no longer need. Consignment is a low-risk, high-profit-potential business I could begin with inventory furnished free! I would not be tied up in products that I may not sell, and my financial risk would be zero for the merchandise.

With careful planning and organization, some basic sales ability, the desire to succeed, and convincing my friends to contribute as consignors, I started my online business in a matter of months. Within a year I opened a brick and mortar store.

My first step was to develop a mission statement for my business. By defining the core purpose of my business, I could compare every action within the business against the mission statement to see if it would further my business interests or hinder them. Shortly thereafter, I realized that if my business could successfully utilize a mission statement to reach its goals, perhaps I should create a personal mission statement to reach my individual goals as well. Having two mission statements helped keep me in focus and motivated my need to realize success in my business. They defined the activities that would consume my time, energy, and focus going forward.

Some of the qualities that have helped me succeed as an entrepreneur:

- **Believe in your dream.** It can be anything from a hobby to an at home business.
- **Visualize success.** Don't just think about it. See it.
- **Organize.** Once you develop an idea and begin visualizing a goal, make a plan. Research everything from how much money you will need to how much you expect to make and find out what others in similar businesses are doing.
- **Stay focused.** Keep your organizational plans in mind and strive to achieve each step, one at a time.
- **Develop self-discipline.** If your hours are 9-5, then don't mosey down to your store at 10 and close at 4. Entrepreneurs work hard. In fact, we put in more hours and work harder than we did as employees.
- **Back-up Plan.** Even if everything was done perfectly, something can throw a wrench in the works. When you have a "Plan B," you will be able to make adjustments and move forward more efficiently.
- **Failure is not an option.** You must believe 100% that you will succeed. You must have faith in God and in your own ability to make things happen. If you believe in yourself and have a passion for what you are doing and a roadmap for where you're going, then success in business and in life is up to you.

To Your Success and May God Bless!

JoAnne Blackwell, Owner

Second Couture Designer Consignment Boutique

50 Tanner Street, Haddonfield, NJ 08033, (856) 216-2276

FAMILY PROFILES



The Road Less Traveled Broadway Producer Alia Jones

Alia M. Jones, daughter of Marilyn and William Underdue, granddaughter of Rosetta Blackwell, is Co-Producer of Tennessee Williams' first African-American revival of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* on Broadway this season. She joined Front Row Productions in 2006 to bring classic works featuring African American actors to Broadway.

Originally from Largo, Maryland, Alia received degrees in Mathematics from Spelman College and Industrial Engineering from Georgia Tech. She spent five years with Procter & Gamble in IT, Finance and Interactive Marketing. After completing her MBA in Finance and Marketing at New York University Stern School of Business, Ms. Jones worked in financial services for five years, beginning with Lehman Brothers and eventually starting her own hedge fund services firm.

Alia hopes that you will join her at a performance of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* on Broadway, at the Broadhurst Theatre, 235 W. 44th St, New York, from February 12, 2008 – June 22, 2008. This explosive new production of the Pulitzer Prize-winning classic features a dynamite cast led by Academy Award nominee Terrence Howard, Tony Award winners Phylicia Rashad and Anika Noni Rose, and Academy Award nominee and two-time Tony winner James Earl Jones. Renowned director and choreographer Debbie Allen directs. Stay tuned for the movie!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sick & Shut-In:

Cousin Thelma Doswell fell and broke her leg. She is recuperating. Susan Sapp (Reunion 2007 Host) recently had surgery and recuperated in North Carolina. We pray that God will bless them with continued good health.

Deaths:

It is with deepest regret that we announce the deaths of Edna W. Blackwell of Richland, NJ, and Nancy Blackwell of Philadelphia, PA. Edna is the sister of Elaine Johnson (Mays Landing, NJ) and the aunt of Susan Blackwell Sapp (Atlantic City). Nancy is the mother of Delores Goldsmith (Philadelphia, PA) and Larry Blackwell (Philadelphia, PA) and the aunt of JoAnne Blackwell (Laurel Springs, NJ).

New Arrivals:



Melissa "Missy" Allen and Brian Moore welcomed Chandler Moore on April 2, 2008 weighing 8.9 ounces and stretching to 21½ inches long. His proud grandparents are Dorothy Allen Staten and Lloyd Allen and his dotting brother Courtland is 2½. Congratulations from the Blackwell Family!

Congratulations:

Cousin Mildred J. Campbell is proud to announce that her son Carl M. Johnson graduated on May 10, 2008 with his Doctor of Ministry from Howard University. Her granddaughter Carlia M. Johnson just completed her freshman year at Virginia Union University.

Forward your announcements, family stories and family history to the Blackwell Family Chronicle, c/o Alia M. Jones, 164 West 133rd St #3, New York, NY 10030 or aliajones@gmail.com to be included in our next issue.



Are You Chartered?

*Blackwell Family Members
Obtain Charters*

Family members are organizing by cities, townships, and states. They are applying for their own charter under the Blackwell Family Association.

Have you affiliated with a group that is already chartered? To date, there are nine chartered family groups. You may ask why charter? The roots of effective charter membership lie in effective group or organizational representation. It will afford the opportunity to send representatives to executive meetings and annual reunions, encourage member participation, act as a liaison by sharing information between its members and the other chartered groups, and provide availability for consultations such as; organizing, research, and hosting reunions, whenever needed and diligence in carrying out assignments.

The Blackwell Family Association shall embrace all family branch lineages throughout the USA. Each family branch shall be allied with the Blackwell Family Association by the Blackwell Family Charter. Membership is being offered to active Branches at a one time fee of \$50, which will cover administrative costs. If you have not formed your Branch, please consider doing so.

The areas currently chartered and their Presidents are listed below contact them. Meet other family members. Find out some of the activities going on already in your area and forward pertinent information about you to your branch president.

<u>Branch</u>	<u>President</u>	<u>Phone</u>
Virginia	Lula B. Clark	804-861-3634
Philadelphia, PA	JoAnne Blackwell	856-401-4073
Bridgeport, CT	John Jones	863 372 - 1347
	Sharon Stokes	203 372 - 1347
Detroit, MI	Robert L. Blackwell	313 869 - 6779
Baltimore, MD	Tracy Smith	410 444- 8707
Richmond, VA	Charles Jones	804 264 -3505
Washington Metro Area	Richard King, Jr.	202 882 – 3447
New Jersey	JoAnne Blackwell	856 401 – 4073
New York	Lillian Dabney	631 234 - 2086

If you are interested in chartering a group of family members, write for an application in care of: Marilyn Underdue, 11306 White House Road, Upper Marlboro, MD 20774, or email mossunder@aol.com.

Join in!

Blackwell Family Association National Officers 2008

PRESIDENT

Paul Blackwell, Jr
Washington, DC

1ST VICE PRESIDENT

JoAnne Blackwell
Laurel Springs, NJ

2ND VICE PRESIDENT

Marilyn Underdue
Upper Marlboro, MD

RECORDING SECRETARY

Joyce Bridgeforth
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Renita Allen
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Randallstown, MD

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Elma Pritchard
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REGISTRAR

Mildred Campbell
Richmond, VA

CHAPLAIN

Roscoe Thomas
Hopewell, VA

HISTORIAN

Thelma S. Doswell
Springdale, MD

IMMEDIATE PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Charles Jones
Richmond, VA

Blackwell Family Association
c/o JoAnne Blackwell
2 Woodmill Drive
Laurel Springs, NJ 08021

