

Press Clippings for 1/6/2023

– Elgin Courier-News –

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

Film ties white slave owner to Black relatives

Elgin woman among descendants

Jan. 6, 2023

By Gloria Casas - Courier-News

The documentary film “Invented, Before You Were Born” follows the story of white siblings Jonathan and Rachel Knight, who discover they are the descendants of Kentucky slave owner Richard Bibb.

The Knights confront their family history and it leads to meeting their relatives, the Black descendants of the people enslaved by the Bibb family, one of whom is Elgin resident **Traci O’Neal Ellis, a former School District U-46 board member, Larkin High School alumna and daughter of Ron O’Neal, U-46’s first Black principal.**

The film will have its Illinois premiere at 4 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 14, at **Larkin High School** as part of the city of Elgin’s 38th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration. Ellis will participate in a panel discussion with filmmakers Jonathan Knight and Le Datta Grimes after the screening.

“I’m really excited about being able to premiere it in Elgin,” said Ellis, who first met her white relatives four years ago at a reunion held at the family plantation in Russellville, Kentucky, which is being restored as a museum.

“It’s part of my family story,” Ellis said. “The documentary filmmaker and I are biologically distant cousins through his family, who were enslavers, and my family, who were enslaved. I am a descendent of both the enslaved and enslavers.”

Richard Bibb, a major in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, emancipated his slaves upon his death, she said. A nonprofit now owns the plantation house and has started restoring it as a museum that will tell Bibb’s story.

When museum officials reached out to family members about the reunion, many had no idea they were related to Bibb, Ellis said. Her connection is through her maternal grandmother's side of the family, she said.

It was a startling experience to stand in the unventilated room where enslaved women and children would have been kept at the plantation and to view the shackles and original signs advertising slaves as having qualities like good teeth, as if they were selling a horse or a cow, Ellis said.

"I said in the film, 'This is what hell must feel like,'" she said. "The story became real."

Her family's story is "traumatic, but it's also comforting to just know," Ellis said. "I come from people who they tried to break but were unbreakable. They survived unthinkable and unimaginable horrors. They persevered."

Prior to the documentary, her family had no information about their roots or where they came from, she said. "I would wish for everyone to learn who they are," she said.

The Bibb family held another reunion in September, and she and Jonathan Knight have kept in touch over the last four years, Ellis said.

"We've embraced each other — even as distant as we are — as cousins. We have been intentional about staying in touch," she said. "Neither one of us asked for this. Neither one of us had anything to do with the story. '(We're trying to) make something good come out of what is a pretty horrific story.'"

Gloria Casas is a freelance reporter for The Courier-News.

Elgin MLK Day events

In addition to the screening of the "Inventing, Before You Were Born" documentary Jan. 14, Elgin's 38th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration includes a prayer breakfast and a food drive.

This year's theme is taken from a King quote: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is 'What are you doing for others?'"

The annual prayer breakfast at 8:30 a.m. Jan. 15 will be led by Danise Habun, who is co-chairing the events with Janice Hare, of Elgin Community College.

The Rev. Dr. Felicia Howell LaBoy of Elgin's First United Methodist Church will be the keynote speaker at Elgin Community College Building E. The Elgin Human Relations Commission will present scholarships and the Dr. King Humanitarian Award at the event, tickets for which are \$25.

The 12th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Food Drive runs through Jan. 15. This year's goal is to collect 100,000 pounds of canned goods and household items for area pantries, Habun said.

Drop-off locations are set up at Gail Borden Public Library, 270 N. Grove Ave.; Elgin Police Department, 151 Douglas Ave.; Elgin City Hall, 150 Dexter Court; and local fire stations.

–The City of West Chicago –

At Home with Merle Burleigh – January 4, 2023

Jan. 4, 2023

By City of West Chicago

MERLE'S CORNER

Here we are in the year of 2023. It always takes me a while to adjust to a new year, especially dating checks, documents, and such. I put the previous year and then try to correct it. On the other hand, it is somewhat exciting to look forward to what the new year may bring. Because of the usual cold temperatures in January and February, this is a good time for relaxing, reading a good book, trying something new, setting some realistic goals, or planning for a vacation or what to plant in the garden. With the new year, we are starting with mainly, a blank slate.

CONSOLIDATED ELECTION

The Consolidated Election takes place Tuesday, June 4, 2023. This election is for officials in the City of West Chicago, West Chicago Public Library District, West Chicago Park District, West Chicago Elementary School District 33, Community High School District 94, Benjamin School District 25, St. Charles Community Unit School District 303 and **School District U-46**. The dates for candidate filing were Monday, Dec. 12, through 5 p.m. Monday, Dec 19, 2022.

In the City of West Chicago positions open are for seven Aldermen for four-year terms on City Council. Filing were Daniel M. Beebe for Ward 1, Jayme A. Sheahan and Crystal Noland-Riani for Ward 2, Alton S. Hallett for Ward 3, Melissa J. Ferguson for Ward 4, John C. Smith, Jr. for Ward 5, Becky Stout for Ward 6 and Joe Morano for Ward 7.

In the West Chicago Public Library District, there are five positions open for the Board of Trustees. Filing were Patricia Weninger, Corrine Jakacki Dattom, Maureen Navadomskis and Scott Grotto.

In the West Chicago Park District, there are three positions open for the Board of Commissioners. Filing was Teresa Carreno.

In West Chicago Elementary School District 33, there are three four-year seats open for the Board of Education. Filing were Rita Balgeman, Kathleen Fry, Janette Hernandez and Tom Doyle.

In Community High School District 94, there are three four-year positions open for the Board of Education. Filing were Penny Munoz, Bob Brown and Lynn Casey-Maher.

In Benjamin School District 25, there are three four-year terms and one two-year unexpired term open. Jodi Krause filed for the two-year term. Filing for the four-year terms were Gina Vlantis and Bridgette Pedersen.

In St. Charles Community Unit School District 303, there are three four-year positions and one two-year unexpired term open for the Board of Education. Filing for the four year terms were Dolores J. Van Heil, Becky McCabe, Joseph “Joe” Patrick Lackner, Matthew T. Kuschert, Lauren Duddles, Elias Palacios and Barbara Diepenbrock, Filing for the two-year term are Thomas Lentz, Mike Becker and Rich Rivard.

In **School District U-46**, there are four seats open for four-year terms. Filing were Kathleen “Kate” Thomas, Susan E. Kerr, Chanda Schwartz, Samreen Khan, Maureen Morris and Heather LH Manzella.

To read the full article, click [here](#).

– Chicago Tribune –

Rick Armstrong's Aurora and Elgin midseason boys basketball report: Oswego East, Burlington Central, Yorkville & more.

Jan. 5, 2023

By Rick Armstrong - Aurora Beacon News

We're halfway there.

Wrapping up holiday tournaments last week marks the midway point of a 31-game season for boys basketball teams in the Aurora and Elgin area.

Plenty of exciting action remains, but here's what we've learned so far:

Topping the charts

[David Douglas Jr.](#), a 6-foot-5 senior guard from Yorkville Christian, is equally adept at slashing to the basket or converting from beyond the arc. He leads area scorers by a large margin, averaging 32.2 points. Harvest Christian's [Ben Lothery](#), another long-distance ace, follows at 22.2 points. Burlington Central's [Drew Scharnowski](#), a Belmont recruit, rounds out the top three at 21.3.



Bartlett's Nathan Scarce (5) passes away while defended by Geneva's Jack Hatton (10) during a non conference game in Bartlett on Tuesday, Nov. 29, 2022. (H. Rick Bamman / The Beacon-News)

To read the full article, click [here](#).